

K & A plus

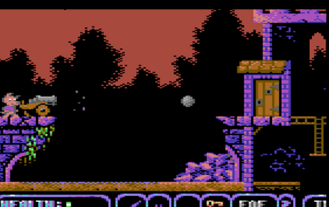
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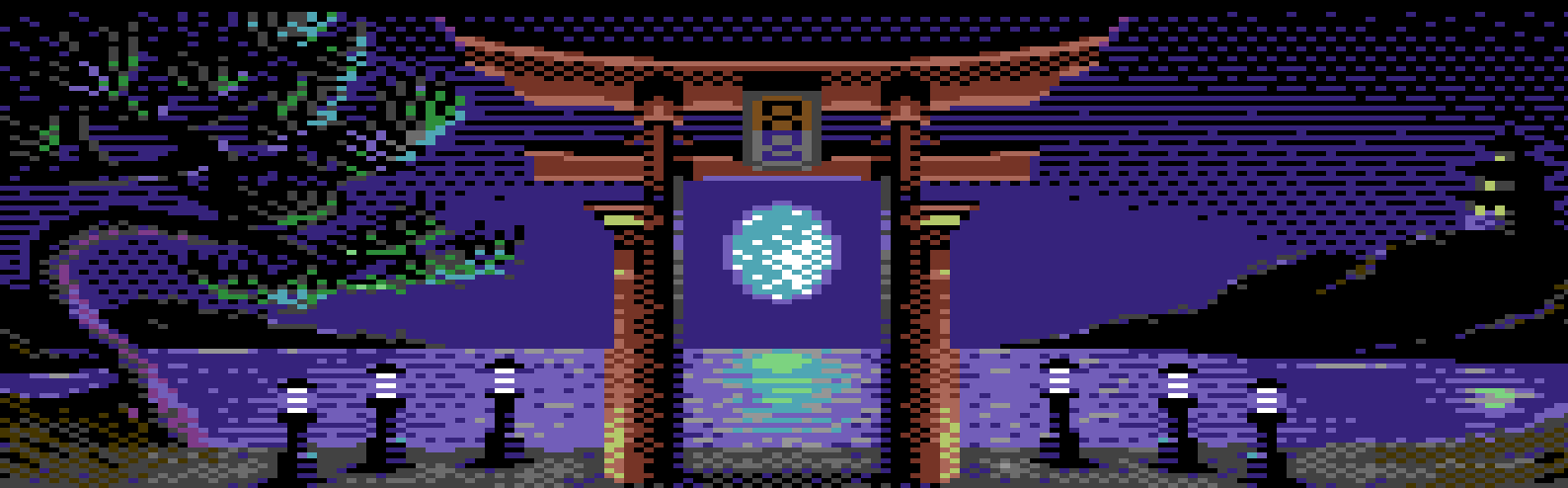
spring/summer 2023

English edition

The path of a 16-bit warrior
Amiga and C64 Beat 'em up reviews

GameDev Story: Dagon's Awakening
New releases: A Pig Quest, Muddy Racers, Zeta Wing 2





■JonEgg – IK the IK+ Lake at Night, 2017

Intro: Beat 'em ups

Welcome, dear reader, to the 23rd issue of Komoda&Amiga+ magazine! This time we have decided to take a closer look at the games known as "beat'em ups". No matter if they are serious products dedicated to noble martial arts or simple street brawls. The thrill of the game, especially in multiplayer mode, is immense and broken joysticks often end up in nearby landfills. Despite appearances, straightforward entertainment is what people want - don't let anyone tell you otherwise. The concept of virtually punching someone in the face without the additional negative consequences we might face from our parents has always been extremely tempting.

The world we live in is often resistant to innovation and change. This was the case with computers, consoles and the first video games. Commodore cleverly and cunningly brought the first popular microcomputers to market. These computers, especially the VIC-20, were designed almost exclusively for gaming. However, the inclusion of a set of connectors, a keyboard and a BASIC interpreter helped to convince parents that they were buying an educational device. This strategy proved successful, as sales confirmed. However, the main purpose of these computers remained video games.

Due to their subject matter and frequent brutality, fighting games quickly became a focus of censorship. Heated debates began in the media. Every manifestation of violence in society began to be explained away as the result of playing 'violent computer games'. Of course, simple explanations of complex issues are the most attractive because they are simple. But this can be seen as a sign of intellectual laziness. It takes a while to point the finger of blame, whereas a comprehensive psychological or sociological study takes months or even years of hard work. Violence has always sold well - just look at the cinema repertoire or the nearest TV news service.

Despite opposition and protests, the video game industry has continued to grow, and with it the genre has evolved. The birth of e-sports, the professionalisation of gamers (which, I must admit, surprised me a little) and the development of specialised controllers such as hitboxes make it difficult to remain indifferent to the subject. Computer games, including beat'em ups, have become an integral part of pop culture, alongside music and film. Regardless of our feelings, computer games are becoming a legacy of civilization - something man has created to fill his free time. With the rapid development of artificial intelligence, I predict that we will soon have much more free time than we do now.

Void and the Editorial crew

C64portal.pl

RETRO
GAMER

R1
RETROFAZA

WPASTALLO

FPWG

Matinowa
Amiga

VINTAGE
COMPUTING
CULTIVATING

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Amiga+
magazine

PenChard

Amiga
Ireland

BOBZ
GAMES

AMIGA NG
Czasopismo użytkowników systemów AmigaOS 4, MorphOS i AROS

RGN
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COMMODORE PLUS/4
WORLD

C64.FUN

RETROHAX.NET

RETROPORTAL.ORG

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spring/summer 2023



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▪C16 ▪C64 ▪C128

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COVER DISK

On the ninth cover disc in the Good Old 8-Bit Games series, it is time for arcade platform games. The last few months have been full of such gems. We are happy to be able to present some of them in our game compilation, with the permission of the authors.

GO8BG#9 is available both digitally and on a floppy. More information about the contents of the disc can be found on page 10.

Komoda & Amiga plus

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Fresh News

Amiga AGA

Bertie's Animal Kingdom

Games That Weren't



This is a production that has recently been re-released thanks to the involvement of the Games That Weren't group. The title was originally released in 2000, but a small print run, unflattering reviews and an unfavourable time for Amiga computers meant that the game ended up in a folder marked 'lost in action' for many years. Bertie's Animal Kingdom was released on both disc and CD. The CD version was enhanced with extra content, but this version has not yet been found. If you can help locate this version, please contact Games That Weren't. Bertie's Animal Kingdom is a children's production consisting of several educational mini-games, mainly involving animal recognition. The production can be played on an Amiga 1200 and the game can be downloaded for free from gamesthatwerent.com. ■ tommy

Amiga

Tenebra

Haplo



"Hello darkness, my old friend" - these are the words that come to my lips after a short game of Tenebra. The game is very atmospheric and dark. Not only because of the lack of any colour in the graphics, but also the general perception and slogans like "The darkness walks with us". Tenebra can be classified as a puzzle game with roguelike elements. Our task is to guide the hapless hero, who is afraid of the dark, through a series of dark corridors to the exit. The game has 31 levels, and the whole thing can be compared to ascetic 8-bit productions. Tenebra received a very enthusiastic reception and positive reviews. It has been made available for free on itch.io. It is also possible to support its creators with any amount of money to get access to all versions of the game, including the original C64 and Commodore Plus/4, as well as ports for Amstrad CPC, NES and ZX Spectrum. The Amiga version of Tenebra is available in two editions: a standard edition with exactly the same graphics as the other versions, and an enhanced edition in higher resolution (with interlace). Haplo, a Sydney-based retro games developer, is responsible for the title. ■ tommy

Amiga AGA

Super Xevious 1200

jotd666



Conversion of an arcade game released by Namco in 1982. The title could be released on the Neo Geo console and Amigas with the AGA graphics chipset. The author of the project reports that the core code of the game can be easily ported to any 68K platform that supports the resolution, number of sprites and colour palette.

The game is a classic shoot'em up and the conversion remains faithful to the original. The title features two-player gameplay and savegames. Responsible for the project is jotd666, who you may know from other conversions of arcade hits for Amiga computers.

■ tommy

Amiga, C64

The Dragnet Case

TaskmasterSoftware



As with Bertie's Animal Kingdom, this is a re-release. The Dragnet Case was originally released on the ZX Spectrum 35 years ago. The game has been essentially reinvented, with the target platforms expanded to include the MSX, IBM PC, Atari ST, Amiga, and the Commodore and Amstrad family of computers. The title is a representative of the now extinct genre of text adventure games, and its graphics are of a residual and illustrative nature.

In the game we play as Sam Boon, a private detective from Los Angeles who is a little bored with finding lost cats. The beginning of the spiral of new adventures is a shootout. Despite its obvious limitations, the production manages to convey

the atmosphere of a black noir detective story. The free game can be downloaded on itch.io on the channel of its creators Taskmaster-Software. The authors' work can be supported by a donation of any amount. ■ **tommysi**

Amiga 1.5 MB chip RAM

Elf Spirit Hunters

Earok



Earlier this year, Elf Spirit Hunters - a small game by Earok created 'on the fly' during Toybox Jam 4 in late 2022 - was released to a wider audience. Toybox Jan is an event for developers to create games using only graphical and audio assets provided by the organisers. Elf Spirit Hunters is inspired by David Crane's 1984 game Ghostbusters.

The aim of the game is to return \$5,500 to the bank and retrieve all 12 Halloween ghosts. To do this, we can hire elves, buy ghost chests or batteries that allow us to use magic rays. Elf Spirit Hunters can be played on Amiga computers with at least 1.5 MB of RAM, as well as on Windows PCs. The game is available on itch.io on the Earok channel. ■ **tommysi**

Amiga 1 MB chip RAM

Ring Around The World

RETREAM



Production is an unusual point-and-click adventure game. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that the gameplay is observed from above, and also in the fact that the creators have given us a kind of open world. The protagonist wakes up on the shore of an unknown world with only two vague memories (including one of drowning in the sea).

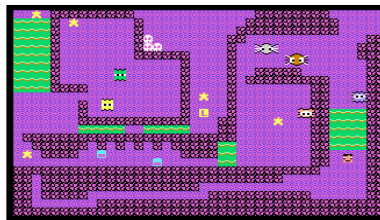
Ring Around The World doesn't offer long gameplay, but it certainly won't be a waste of time.

The studio behind the production is RETREAM, known for productions such as ArtPazz and SkillGrid. The game requires at least 1 MB of Chip RAM and can be downloaded from itch.io. Although the game is free, the producer's website encourages you to support people who are victims of violence in any way you can. ■ **tommysi**

C64

Rambler

Stepz



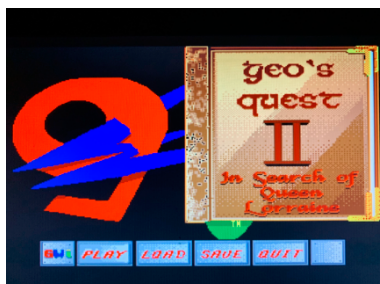
If you like arcade games, Rambler will certainly appeal to you. Collecting scattered stars and avoiding creatures and obstacles are the main attractions of the game, which consists of 11 levels. The old school style graphics are also worth mentioning. Rambler has a high difficulty level, which is an added attraction for players who like challenges. All in all, a very good and addictive arcade game.

Finally, some very sad news. We have learned from itch.io that the author of the game Stepz... has passed away. May he rest in peace. ■ **Komek**

Amiga 1,5 MB chip RAM

Geo's Quest 2

Paul Golan



A happily completed point-and-click adventure game. Fortunately, because its author, Paul Golan, started working on it in 2000. An incomplete and underdeveloped

version of Geo's Quest 2: In search of Queen Lorraine appeared in 2002, as the author hoped it would be completed by another developer. However, this did not happen. In the autumn of 2021. Paul retired and finally found the time to finish old projects. Compared to the original version 20 years ago, the game has been completely reworked and improved. We can download the title for free on Aminet and read about it on the eab.abime.net forum.

The production will run on Amiga equipped with at least 1.5 MB RAM chip. The creator of the game has announced that he is working on the next part. ■ **tommysi**

Amiga AGA 8 MB Fast RAM

Death Rally

Bszili



Another conversion of a game released in 1996 for the DOS PC. The creator of the code is Szilárd Biró aka Bszili, a Hungarian programmer well known in the Amiga world. It should be remembered that Bszili specialises in converting games from PC to Amiga computers. His credits include Duke Nukem 3D, Wolfenstein 3D, Blood and Shadow Warrior.

The original Death Rally is a game developed by the famous Remedy studio, whose portfolio includes such hits as Max Payne, Alan Wake and Control. The game is often referred to as a 2.5D racing game, meaning that isometric projection principles have been cleverly used to create the illusion of three-dimensionality. Death Race runs on an Amiga 1200 with at least 8 MB of Fast RAM. To play, you will need the files from the PC version, which can be found for free on Steam and elsewhere. The game is available for free, and installation instructions and the necessary files can be found on the eab.abime.net forum. ■ **tommysi**

C64

Caim

Haplo



A title in the adventure genre. In the game we control an anonymous character who wakes up in a completely unknown place. Our task is to find out where we came from and how to get out. But before we can find our way out, we have to face an adventure. As we traverse the unknown terrain, we will encounter a variety of dangers and discover secrets that will help us reach the exit. The game offers thirty interesting rooms to explore, three difficulty levels and a map. Caim presents itself quite well. The graphics, although not spectacular, are clear and in the style of productions from the second half of the 1980s. The catchy soundtrack adds to the exploration of the mysterious facility. In terms of playability, Caim is addictive. The game can be downloaded from <https://h4plo.itch.io/caim>. ■ **Retro Chlop**

VIC-20 +24k

VIC Strip

Tocra

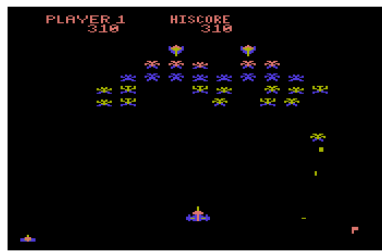


Ever wanted to get closer to your VIC-20 by playing Strip Poker? Thanks to the VIC Strip game, which won third place in the Revision 2023 game competition, you can do just that. In addition to your VIC, three famous ladies sit down to play! The game features a new graphics mode that cleverly changes the colour of the background in the correct grid position, allowing more colours to be displayed. If you want to learn more, read "New frontiers in high-resolution VIC graphics, part 18" on the Denial forum. You can also download the game from there. ■ **Erik**

Plus/4

Galaxian Plus4

Gaia/Csabo

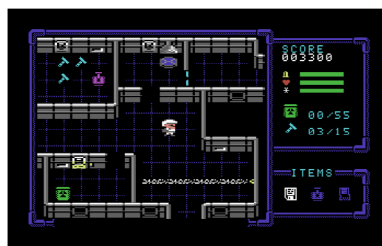


Let's go back to 1979 for a moment. - The historic Galaxian is making its way into living rooms. Yes, my dears, after 44 years Plus/4 has made a good conversion of this game. The smooth animation of the aliens, the good shooting and the preservation of the spirit of the original stand out. Let's shoot like in the old days. The classics are still alive! ■ **Komek**

C64

Space Station 23

Vector5 Games



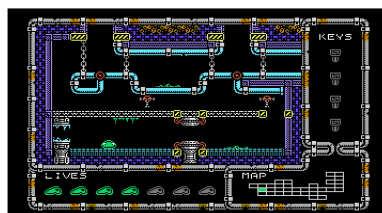
We find ourselves in the depths of a space station that has been partially damaged by a collision with an asteroid. It has also been attacked by a pack of nasty aliens. Oh no! This can't be happening! Joe Phoenix springs into action and must restore the station to working order and destroy the evil aliens. With a huge area to explore (240 rooms) and plenty of items to collect, it's hard to tear yourself away from the screen. Some interesting visual and sound effects add to the fun. Be sure to check it out!

■ **Komek**

C64

Ooze: The Escape

Haplo



Ooze on the C64! Yes, thanks to a great conversion by Haplo. The

original version of the game was released on the ZX Spectrum by Bubblesoft in 1977. The main character, Ooze, is a slimy substance that can stick to various surfaces. His goal is to get out of an underground complex where various dangers lurk. How does the new version differ from the original? First of all, the graphics and sprites have been improved, new animations have been created, new rooms have been added and the gameplay has been enhanced. Courtesy of Haplo, you can find Ooze the Escape on our latest Good Old 8-Bit Games #9 cover disc.

■ **Komek**

C64

The Last Defender

LC-Games



Remember the bubble shooting game Pang? This multiplatform arcade game stole the hearts of many gamers. Recently, LC-Games released The Last Defender, a game with a design reminiscent of the iconic Pang. The player's task is to defend Earth against the invasion of an alien civilization. To do this, a skilled daredevil equipped with a laser pistol is called upon to deal with the invaders. The game features 21 levels with a choice of three difficulty levels. Pretty cool graphics and sound effects and fast-paced action make this arcade game well worth your time.

■ **Komek**

C16/Plus4

Sir Knight C16

C64Mark & DMX87



Sir Knight is an old game that was reworked a few months ago by C64Mark (code) and DMX87

(music). The main character of the game is a noble knight who has to rescue the beautiful Princess Ethel, who is imprisoned in the Castle of the Black Skull. The task is not easy, because on your way to the princess you will encounter, among other things, archers shooting and cannons spitting fire. The new version on C16 has improved graphics, although they are slightly darker than the old version. There are also new and much better sound effects and 16 new levels. All in all, a cool game with a typical old school atmosphere. ■ **Komek**

PET

PETSCII Bros

Jimbo

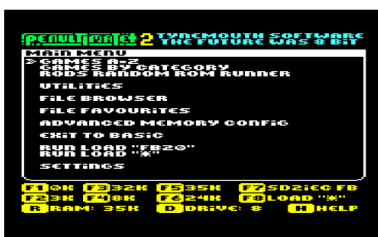


What a pleasant surprise! The iconic Mario Bros arcade on the Commodore PET. I don't think anyone needs to be told what this game is (those who don't know better won't admit it). It's amazing what can be done with such a low-powered computer - this conversion is simply great. Everything works perfectly for the capabilities of the PET. The creator of this miracle is Jimbo, who has other such surprises in store for us, but you can read about them later in the magazine. ■ **Komek**

VIC-20

Penultimate+2 Cartridge

Tynemouth Software



A new edition of the Penultimate Cartridge ('originally' named the Penultimate+2) will be released soon by Tynemouth Software and TFW8b. Unlike a Hollywood sequel, this one is actually bigger and better than the previous edition.

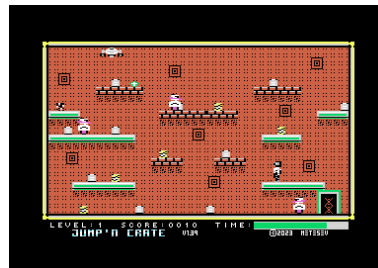
With 200+ games, a random ROM runner, utility ROMs, configurable memory settings and a built in file browser with favorites it will never leave your VIC-20 cartridge port. The Penultimate+2 can be pre-ordered from the TFW8b website.

■ **Erik**

C64

Jump'n Crate

Metesev



There you go! What a cool platform game this is. A mysterious base, sinister robots, crates full of valuable stuff, sounds great, doesn't it? The aim of the game is to collect all the crates in the aforementioned base, which is guarded by armed robots. The main factor here is the time you have left, which is reduced if you are hit by a missile or collect a wrong crate. Good graphics, fast-paced action, and good playability make Jump'n Crate a compelling game. ■ **Komek**

C64

Herisferix

TND



Feel like letting off steam after all the excitement of the day? Then Herisferix is the game for you, putting you in the role of a space fighter pilot. Your base has been attacked by an alien empire, so you have to fly through all five zones to defeat the evil empire. Herisferix reminded me a little of the well-known hit Warhawk, but it was developed in the S.E.U.C.K. system, so there is nothing to compare the two productions. Nevertheless, I found it quite fun to play, not least because of the clear and colourful

graphics and the fighter bonus packs that can be earned during the game. ■ **Komek**

C64

Dr. Maria

Sysantmin

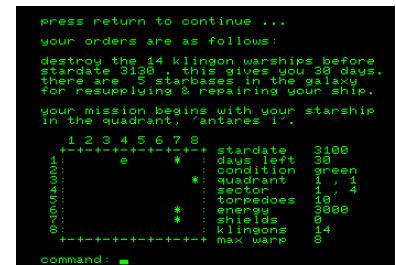


Beware: the experimental viruses in the research lab have undergone a strange mutation and are trying to spread. Luckily, there's Doctor Maria, who's on hand with special pills to destroy the menacing viruses. All in all, this is yet another Tetris clone based on the famous Dr Mario from the NES console. In short, fun and addictive gameplay guaranteed, see for yourself. We all love classics, especially with a little facelift, don't we? ■ **Komek**

PET

Super Star Trek

electron.greg



Space: the final frontier. The crew of the Starship Enterprise is on a mission of exploration. It explores strange worlds and civilisations. It boldly goes where no man has gone before. The Federation and the Klingons. An unresolved conflict. The Great Galactic War hangs in the balance. And one starship and one Starfleet captain can save the universe. The USS Enterprise and you, in the control room of one of the most famous starships in global pop culture.

You could be James T. Kirk (I always preferred him) or Jean Luc Picard. Another interesting release for PET.

■ **phowiec**

Gallery: X'2023

The X party in Someren, the Netherlands, has been the most important event in the Commodore demoscene in years. Sceners pour their sweat to show us something new, and the competitions held in various categories (C64 Demo, 4k Intro, Music, Graphics, Mixed Graphics) are usually on the highest world level. For the last few years, we have been publishing graphics related to this event on our pages and this time it will be no different. In this month's gallery you will find the graphics ranked according to their place in the competition (the undisputed victory of the 'Man of Many Hours' graphic in the main Graphics category), while the last three works on the adjacent page are the best graphics in the Mixed Graphics category. As you can see, PETSCII has held its own for quite some time.

▼ The Man of Many Hours – Duce / Extend



▼ Broken – Electric / Extend



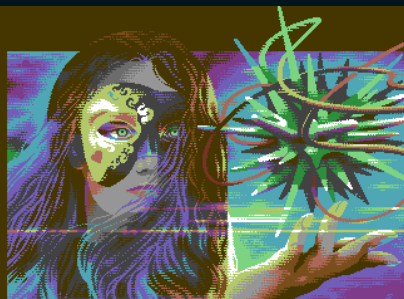
▼ I Love Reyn – Facet / Bonzai, GP



▼ Sol Invictus – Talent / Censor Design



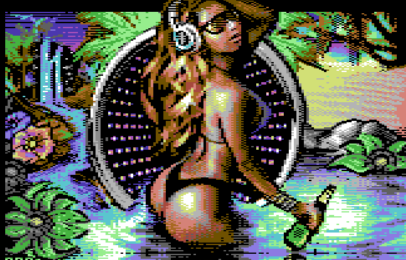
▼ Dopamine Girl – Sulevi / Extend, Virtual Dreams



▼ The Lookout – LMan / Censor Design, Maniacs of Noise, MultiStyle Labs



▼ Someren är Kort – Apollyon / Artline Designs, Index



▼ Me Love You Longtime – Der Piipo / Extend, Orange



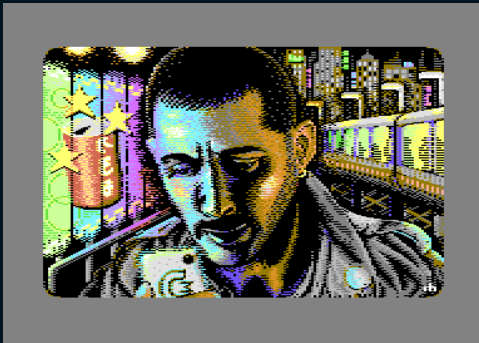
▼ Splash! – Mikael / Pretzel Logic



X'2023 by a scener: Wacek

The graphics competition at X did not disappoint, although some people complained about the big screen colour settings. Nevertheless, we saw fantastic work from the leading demoscene. Amongst the many great graphics, Duce's work stood out, eliciting first a collective response of admiration and then thunderous applause. The mode in which it was created was called QCH by the author, Copyfault. Attention was also drawn to the work of Talent, whose original dithering style is still fresh to the demoscene. However, the hidden gem of this comp was the work of ibux. Although it was ranked much lower, it was completely different from the others - almost shadeless, clear and very artistic. It was worth waiting five years for such a compo.

▼ A Bright Future – Nith / Triad



▼ Sore Loser – Hani / Gorbat Soft



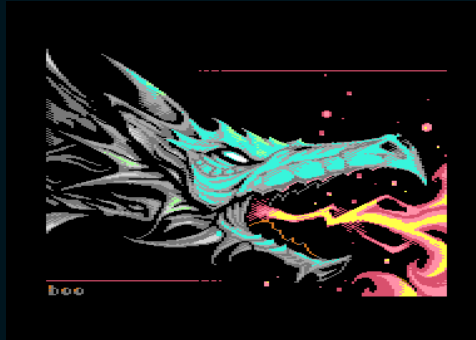
▼ Seven Ghosts of Rämenevaletto – ibux / Artline Designs, Onslaught



▼ Looking for X – Katon / Lepsi De & Sebaloz / Lepsi De



▼ Spitfire – Boo / Creators



▼ Tapedrive – BlackWine / DreamWeb



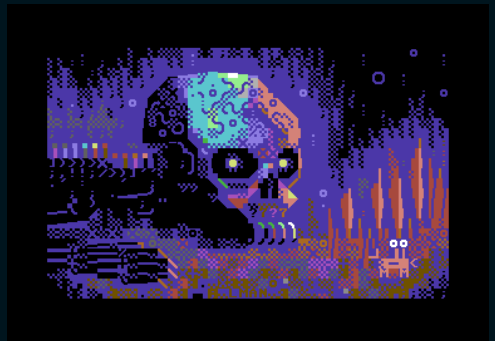
▼ Faun – Electric / Extend



▼ Wise & Fat – Lobo / Atlantis, Onslaught & Mikael of Pretzel Logic



▼ Skully and His Pal – LMan / Censor Design, Maniacs of Noise, MultiStyle Labs



Good Old 8-Bit Games #9

The side A of the ninth issue of the 8-bit coverdisk comes in two versions: one is traditionally for our English readers, and the second one includes the Polish version of the game Dagon's Awakening, designed by our friends from Bobr.Games and Vintage Computing Carinthia. For the Polish players this is a brand new release. The quality of the compilation is also proven by this year's gems - mainly platformers. The SID included in the loader, however, is the timeless 'Chordian' by JCH (who, by the way, changed his nickname to Chordian in 2006). Although this track will be familiar to you from many other releases, we also decided to bring back the magic of years gone by with this old school track in our loader.

PS Chordian is also the author of the web-based SID-player combo, which can be found at <http://deepsid.chordian.net>. Highly recommended!

Dagon's Awakening, UCC & Bobr.Games, 2023

You can read about the idea and process of creating this game in a separate article written especially for us by Łukasz from Bobr.Games. Check out this GameDev story to get a full picture of what it means to make a game for a non-programmer.

Endless Forms Most Beautiful, Rikib80, 2019

A beautifully made and very playable platformer from a few years ago.

Qwak, Oziphantom, 2016

After BBC Micro, Acorn, Amiga and some other computers, we can now play Qwak on the C64. The source code for this version is available at <https://github.com/oziphantom/Qwack64>, if you want to see 'how they did it'...

Rambler, Stepz, 2023

An entertaining arcade game with cool ideas and interesting levels.

Paul der Kaefer, CP Verlag, 1988

A SEUCK shooter for 1 or 2 players, forgotten and found by me years later. I first came across it on a pirate cassette game compilation, where it existed under the title "Insects".

Mike Mech, LC-Games, 2023

Another high-end platformer in which we take on the role of a mechanic on a mission to activate the batteries that power our spaceship.

Pik n Mix, Arlasoft, 2022

I followed the game's development for months on Twitch streams, focusing on the programming tricks of its author, Shallan50K. You can read about the game itself in the review on page 41 of this issue of K&A+.

Randoom, Picaro Games, 2021

A very appealing idea for a game in the style of the iconic Bubble Bobble. Graphically, maybe nothing special, but in terms of playability - great!

Spoil, Hokuto Force, 2020

Explore invisible platforms in a very limited time in a fail-repeat concept. Break the joystick!

Ooze: The Escape, Haplo, 2023

A conversion of a ZX Spectrum game from the ever-reliable Haplo. Help the jellybean Ooze escape from the maze using the creature's unique gravity skills.

PETSCII Lemmings, Kornel Kolma, 2021

A port of Jim Orlando's excellent PETSCII Zombie Lemmings from the PET computer. The C64 version is equally brilliant, but there are a few keys to master as the game is controlled from the keyboard.

GO8BG#9 Loader, 2023

Loader that loads games from the collection. Code: Tomxx, Logo design: Katon, music: Jens-Christian Huus (JCH) - Chordian.





EDITORIAL

Amiga fighting games overview

■ author: tommysi / translation: Ari

Personally, I think that the Amiga family computers were not the best platform for beat'em up games. We associate these types of productions more with arcade machines or home consoles. This may seem a bit odd, given the Amiga's history and her console roots. After all, the heart of both personal computers and consoles is the CPU, and in many cases it was exactly the same model. For example, the Apple II, Commodore 64, Atari 400/800 have the exact same processor as the NES (Nintendo Entertainment System) and Sega Master System. The Amiga 500, on the other hand, has the same central computing chip as the legendary Neo Geo console.

So what is the reason that the Amiga didn't get its way with beat'em up games?

It seems to me that the main issue comes from the control method in this type of games. I must admit there were many beat'em up titles for the Amiga. I might be wrong, but most of them were arcade machines and consoles ports. There were, of course, titles created exclusively for Amiga computers, but they were designed for single-button joystick control (players who have already tried playing, for example, Streets of Rage on arcade machines or on Sega Mega Drive consoles, sold with six-button gamepads, did not like it). In other words, playing ports was satisfying, as long as we equipped our Amiga with the right controller. These, on the other hand, were very expensive and very rare in 1990s Poland. On the other hand, playing Amiga-dedicated brawlers with a one-button joystick doesn't bring any particular joy. Moreover, it gave the impression of dealing with an underdeveloped product.

I tasked myself with creating a list of Amiga beat'em ups that are worth getting acquainted with. I have also listed those that should be avoided at all costs. The order of the titles presented below is random and does not form any ranking. Their selection was very subjective and is mainly based on my impressions from interacting with a particular game, as well as general vision.

WORTH CHECKING OUT



This title is often mentioned by Amiga players next to Mortal Kombat and Street Fighter. It's much closer to the latter, but the game has its own unique atmosphere, quite a few fighting modes and a dozen characters to choose from. Graphics and sound design stand at a very decent level.

MORTAL KOMBAT

DEV: MIDWAY GAMES, PUB: MIDWAY GAMES, ACCLAIM ENTERTAINMENT, 1992/1993

This game needs no introduction to anyone. Some say it's where it all started (whatever that means). The fact is that it is the first non-Japanese brawler to achieve such a huge (worldwide) success. Interestingly, it was created practically by only two people - Ed Boon and John Tobias. The game on the day of its release was characterized by great graphics and extraordinary brutality, which caused quite a controversy.



The appearance of this title was only a matter of time. The game, compared to its first part, was expanded with additional characters (15, there were only 7 in MK 1) and additional options for fight endings. Two types of Fatality (brutal execution) were assigned to each of the 15 characters, in addition to Babality (turning the opponent into a crying infant) and Friendship (a gesture of a defeated opponent's life).

STREET FIGHTER 2

DEV: CAPCOM, PUB: CAPCOM, 1991

I deliberately omit the first game in this series here, because I'm simply not too familiar with it. As it turns out, not only me. Many other players also missed this title for some reason. Street Fighter 2 is a game as important as Mortal



Kombat. We have eight characters at our disposal, there is no need to write about the rules of the game. The title is distinguished by the presence of special stages during which we demolish the car, break barrels or piles of bricks. The whole game is well voiced and decorated with manga-style graphics. Of all the Street Fighter games available on the Amiga, I especially recommend Super Street Fighter II Turbo.



It's another fighting game right next to Shadow Fighter, inseparably associated with Amiga computers. The game is nothing special, just another one inspired by the Street Fighter series. The Team17 studio, well-deserved for the Amiga world, is responsible for the production of the game. Three games have been released as part of the Body Blows series, I especially recommend the one with the subtitle Galactic.



This is one of the oldest games on this list. Originally released for Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum and Amstrad CPC computers. The Amiga version was released in 1988. The game has an arcade character, but its dynamics is far from titles like Street Fighter. Nevertheless, the production is very playable and gives a lot of fun - even today.

BARBARIAN

DEV: PALACE SOFTWARE,
PUB: PALACE SOFTWARE, 1987

Like International Karate, it is a game with 8-bit roots. The Amiga version has received a number of improvements and fixes. The title is maintained in the dark fantasy climate. The boxed version has a fantastic cover, created

from photos of real models/actors. The game has caused a number of controversies, among other things because of the gore presented in it, as well as the possibility of decapitating our opponent. As usual in such cases, the publicity only brought the game more popularity.

WORTH CHECKING OUT, BUT...



Originally available only on the Sega Mega CD, the Amiga conversion was not so good. However, this is not the biggest problem with this title. Casting anthropomorphic animals as warriors might seem like a cool idea, but the whole thing came out very average. The graphics also leave a lot to be desired and certainly do not take advantage of the capabilities of 16/32-bit computers.



Another production from System3 studio, but this time much less successful than International Karate. The advantages include the fact that it is the only Amiga "brawler" depicting/dealing with/about Thai boxing, that I know of. The game-play itself, if it doesn't last too long, also seems to be not too bad. Graphically, Bangkok Nights are mediocre; Amiga version looks almost exactly the same as the 8-bit version.

FULL CONTACT

DEV: TEAM17, PUB: TEAM17, 1991

I have a feeling that this game is the spiritual heir to International Karate; only that with proper 16-bit graphics. This title is a perfect example of a game with a storyline that outweighs the gameplay it offers. Seemingly, everything in this production is in the right place, but it doesn't attract attention for as long as International Karate.

ELFMANIA

DEV: TERRAMARQUE,
PUB: RENEGADE SOFTWARE, 1994)

According to the internet, this is the only game on this list released exclusively for Amiga computers. The game charms with its atmosphere and very pleasing to the eye Amiga graphics. Unfortunately, it is also characterized by clumsy controls and an exaggeratedly high difficulty level, which personally led me to irritation.

DANGEROUS STREETS
PROD. MICROMANIA,
PUB: FLAIR SOFTWARE, 1993



It took me a long time to decide whether to put this title in the guilty pleasure category. The game at the time of its release was received very critically by both the press and players. However, there is something attractive about it - the graphics. The characters are very large, original and nicely drawn; unfortunately, their animation is a complete disaster. It's as if the game would sell in the press only as static images. Is it worth checking out? Certainly, as a curiosity.

CYBERGAMES

DEV: CYBERPUNKS DEVELOPMENTS,
PUB: XAKK, 1995

The game for some reason was released under a shareware license; personally, I have seen many worse productions released in official, commercial, distribution. Also noteworthy is the fact that this title was set in a cyberpunk setting, which is rare for brawlers. Unfortunately, the animation is not very smooth, and the controls are, to put it mildly, clumsy, which affects the overall playability.

AVOID / GUILTY PLEASURE ONLY

FIST FIGHTER

DEV: ZEPPELIN GAMES,
PUB: ZEPPELIN GAMES, 1993

This game is often categorized as a beat'em up. I completely don't understand why, because the only thing it has in common with this genre is the minimal ability to scroll the screen left or right. Nice main menu screen, nice character bio boards and nice backgrounds, but the rest of the aspects of this game should be passed over in silence. Remember... I warned you.

PRAWO KRWI

DEV: MYYS ART,
PUB: TECHLAND SOFT, 1995



Finally a polish accent on this list, it's just a shame that it exists in this last category. The game tried to be a digitized walking brawler, referring in climate to another polish game - Franko. Moreover, the authors of the production often compared it to Mortal Kombat. Lack of character choice, poor range of kicks and punches, faulty game mechanics and zero atmosphere are just the beginning of the list of negative features of this title.

METAL KOMBAT

DEV: DECK SIX, PUB: MARKSOFT, 1995

Another polish game on this list and, unfortunately, another in the guilty pleasure category. In Metal Kombat we are dealing with something that tries to be a walking brawler. This time the main characters are robots. You might think that this is a good idea, but unfortunately the execution is really poor. It's simply unplayable. Just another embodiment of the word "crap".

RISE OF THE ROBOTS

DEV: MIRAGE,
PUB: TIME WARNER INTERACTIVE, 1994

Initially, Rise of the Robots promised to be a high-budget blockbuster. The rendered graphics, although somewhat sterile, promised that the game would be a very modern production. The cinematic interludes and interesting storyline also did not foreshadow an incoming disaster. So what went wrong? Marketing excess of form over content. The press simply lied about what was to come in the game. Rise of the Robots is simply a misunderstanding and a programming garbage.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

DEV: CLICKBOOM INTERACTIVE,
PUB: PXL COMPUTERS, 1996

A very interesting title, mainly due to the graphic consistency of the characters and the backgrounds. All this, set in a dark atmosphere, made a very good first impression. Unfortunately, interacting with this game for more than five minutes causes us to start noticing its flaws. Among many others the biggest one is very poor playability, which in turn is caused by clumsy controls, very high difficulty level and a small number of hits. ■

Artificial human?

■ author and translation: Void



EDITORIAL

My first contact with computers (called personal computers) came at the height of the popularity of text-based role-playing games, often without graphics, using only text to describe the virtual world and allowing conversation with the player using sentences - commands entered from the keyboard, usually in English. The first programming language I learned, BASIC, allowed me to write similar games, but I quickly discovered that it was not at all easy to parse and understand the input.

Forty years later, in November 2022, a real revolution took place - GPT 3.5 - a large language model based on an artificial neural network (a kind of mathematical and computer simulation of the workings of the human brain) was released. The model was trained to understand natural language, and the first phase of learning, called machine learning, consisted of "feeding" the model with a large number of documents published on the Internet. The result was made available to the public by OpenAI in the form of an easy-to-use chatbot.

The career of chatGPT, now available to some users in the GPT-4 version, has been breathtaking. Suffice it to say that the model doesn't just boil down to English language skills. Want to chat in Polish? Go ahead. I assume chatGPT knows many other languages. Programming languages? No problem. ChatGPT knows how to program. It has extensive knowledge of history, medicine and mathematics. And all of this was launched just a few months ago. What's to come over the next couple of years?

As an experiment, I decided to talk to the GPT-4 chatbot about the retro scene and K&A+, and I present the result of the conversation below. Please note that I conducted the conversation in English, and the machine-generated answers were not proofread by us.

Have you heard about "Komoda & Amiga plus"?

Yes, I've heard of "Komoda & Amiga plus" magazine. It is a publication dedicated to the retro computing scene, focusing primarily on the Commodore and Amiga computer systems. The magazine covers various aspects of these classic systems, including hardware, software, programming, gaming, and community events. It features articles, interviews, and reviews related to the retro computing community.

The magazine is published in both Polish and English and has a global readership. While its primary focus is on the Commodore 64 and Amiga computers, it also occasionally covers other retro platforms. The goal of the magazine is to preserve and celebrate the history and culture of these iconic computing systems while fostering a sense of community among enthusiasts.

Why in the XXI century are there still people interested in retro computers?

In the 21st century, there are several reasons why people remain interested in retro computers:

Nostalgia: Many people have fond memories of using retro computers when they were younger. They may have

played classic games, learned programming, or even used them for work. These experiences have left a lasting impression and evoke a sense of nostalgia.

Simplicity: Retro computers often have simpler hardware and software compared to modern systems. This simplicity can be appealing to those who want to understand how computers work at a fundamental level or to those who want to develop their programming skills without the complexities of modern systems.

Collecting: Retro computers have become collector's items, and some enthusiasts enjoy acquiring and restoring old machines. There is a sense of satisfaction in restoring an old computer to its former glory, and these devices often have unique designs and features that are interesting to collectors.

Preservation: There is a desire to preserve the history of computing and ensure that the knowledge, software, and cultural aspects of these early computers are not lost. This includes archiving software, preserving hardware, and maintaining documentation to better understand the context and significance of these systems.

Community: Retro computing enthusiasts often form communities where they can share their experiences, knowledge, and passion for these systems. This sense of camaraderie and shared interest fosters a strong connection among members of the community.

Gaming: Classic games from retro computers have a unique charm and gameplay that many modern games lack. People enjoy revisiting these games, and some even prefer them to contemporary offerings.

Creativity: The limitations of retro computers can inspire creativity, as developers and hobbyists are forced to work within the constraints of the hardware. This can result in innovative solutions and unique experiences that may not have been possible with more powerful systems.

Overall, the interest in retro computers stems from a combination of nostalgia, appreciation for simpler technology, a desire to preserve history, and the enjoyment of unique experiences that these systems provide.

What will be the future of the retro scene, what do you think?

The future of the retro computing scene will likely continue to evolve, but several key aspects can be anticipated:

Preservation and archiving: As time goes on, there will be an increased focus on preserving and archiving retro

computer hardware, software, and documentation. This will help ensure that future generations can access and learn about these classic systems. Digital preservation efforts, such as emulation and virtualization, will continue to improve and become more sophisticated, enabling users to experience retro computing on modern devices.

New developments in hardware and software: The retro computing scene has witnessed the development of new hardware and software projects, often inspired by or directly compatible with classic systems. This trend is likely to continue, with enthusiasts creating new games, applications, and hardware modifications or expansions that build on the legacy of these iconic platforms.

Community growth: The retro computing community will likely continue to grow and evolve, connecting people with shared interests across the globe. Online forums, social media, and events like conventions and expos will further strengthen the community, providing opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and camaraderie.

Education and outreach: Retro computers can serve as an educational tool, offering insights into the history of computing and the evolution of technology. By sharing knowledge and resources, enthusiasts can inspire and educate younger generations, who may become interested in retro computing themselves.

Crossover with modern technology: The integration of retro computing elements into modern technology, such as incorporating classic game characters or design aesthetics into new games, will likely continue. This blending of old and new can help introduce the retro scene to a broader audience, further expanding its reach and influence.

Increased mainstream recognition: As the retro computing scene grows, it is likely to gain more recognition in mainstream media and pop culture. This can lead to more widespread interest, attracting new enthusiasts and further solidifying the scene's place in the broader cultural landscape.

In summary, the future of the retro computing scene appears bright, with continued growth, innovation, and preservation efforts ensuring that these classic systems remain relevant and accessible for generations to come.

Thank you for Your answers. We would love to publish this conversation in the newest edition of "Komoda & Amiga".

I'm glad you found the conversation helpful and informative. I would be honored to have this conversation published in the newest edition of "Komoda & Amiga." If you need any additional information or have further questions, please feel free to ask. I'm here to help. Thank you for considering my input for your magazine, and I wish you continued success with your publication! ■

Street Fighter: Behind the scenes



EDITORIAL

■ authors: c00k & Leon / translation: Toby

THE GENESIS

The year is 2001, and the world is a very dangerous place... oh, sorry. I'm not supposed to write about one of my favorite series here. Let's rewind time back to 1984, to the so-called Golden age of arcade video games, when arcades became an essential part of the culture and gaming machines started popping up even in restaurants and liquor stores. This is when the Kung-Fu Master game was created. To understand the game, however, we have to go back another three years, when one of the most interesting twists in cinematography, the film *Tower of Death*, starring Bruce Lee, was made. In any case, cutting coupons from blockbusters is always a good idea. It was the same with the Kung-Fu Master game, which can pretend to be an almost faithful copy of the film.

Violence and famous characters always sell well, but there is one problem. In the long run, covering the same opponents in the same way gets boring, fast. That's why each stage ends with a boss fight. The boss has special blows and requires an individual approach - that's where the real fun begins! What if you took the best part of this game, such a *crème de la crème* of gameplay, and packed it all into its own, separate game? That's exactly how the first game in the Street Fighter series came to be. With the creation of this game in 1987, a certain - now common - standard was introduced: each character has special blows activated by a combination of joystick movements and button presses. Sounds awfully

simple, right? This is why just four years later an even more elaborate version of this brawler was made, which somewhat gave up on realism in favor of playability and raised the bar very high. High enough that, compared to other brawlers, the game still looks good. Let me tell you an anecdote from the world of combat sports. During the famous MMA gala, where Mariusz Pudzianowski had his debut in the sport, ground fighter Daniel Dowd was in a professional duel. The duel was made all the more interesting because of the fact that his opponent was the excellent striker James Zikic. Daniel Dowda lost, and the presenter then said the words: "The days of dominance of Brazilian jiu jitsu are over." He was right, fighting styles have changed, but the change would not have occurred if not for Brazilian jiu jitsu. Likewise here - many better brawlers have been made throughout the years, some succeeding through the tried-and-true marketing principle of "it's either boobs or violence," but they would not have been created if not for Street Fighter 2.

Highlighting its importance is the fact that, even after the golden age of arcade video games has passed, Street Fighter 2 led to the renaissance of said platform. It also gave rise to the competition known as esports and initiated the Evolution Championship Series - a major tournament that still takes place today. All of the above are a testament to the importance of this title. Unfortunately, we can only speak in superlatives about the slot machine version, as the PC conversions were, to put it mildly, less successful.



THE PROBLEMS

The Street Fighter series of brawlers initially had no luck on home computers. A wave of criticism fell on ports released through British video game publisher U.S. Gold. In the pages of the Western computer press, the shortcomings that the conversions had in comparison to the original arcade game were scored. Falstart already scored the first installment of the series impoverished in relation to the original from slot machines. As seen by the reviews, 1988's Street Fighter was beaten in terms of playability by the much simpler International Karate+. Both the C64 version and the 16-bit computer editions were rated very badly. It was no better with the sequel, Street Fighter II: The World Warrior, which - even during the rise of PCs - paled in comparison to the arcade version. It was also no different on the Amiga, where the game required a lot of patience due to the need to shuffle floppy disks and the long time it took to load fights. It was obvious to the naked eye that SF2 did not take full advantage of the hardware capabilities offered by the aforementioned platforms. Today, as people in the video game industry begin to reveal the behind-the-scenes of their work from years ago, one can understand the situation better. Some light was shed on this by the discussion under the video titled "Street Fighter II AGA: The impossible Amiga port, made possible...?" published on YT on the Pixel Shade channel. The video shows a promising demo engine, which proves that an arcade-comparable port of SF2 can be created on the A1200. Among the numerous comments, the most noteworthy is the one by a certain Mike Guy. The commentator, claiming to have been a member of the Creative Materials team that created an Amiga port of SF2 for U.S. Gold, described his involvement in the project. His role was to trim the graphics, which also involved reducing the color palette from 256 to 32 and eliminating the parallax effect that gave the multiplane backgrounds. On top of that, there was pressure from the publisher to reduce the number of floppy disks in the box, so even more elements that were well-known from the original were removed.

By the way, it would be appropriate to mention the cassette version for the C64, Street Fighter II Erzac. The version that I managed to buy in a computer store for the hefty price of 55 thousand zlotys (the standard compilation cassette cost at the time was about 25-30 thousand, but what wouldn't one do to fulfill their dreams), had extra fights that didn't require you to choose a player. To recap, I was able to fight several fights against selected characters (not all of them), each of which was its own standalone game.

Top-of-the-line on the Amiga, as it might seem, 1995's Super Street Fighter II Turbo, released in AGA version on 11 floppy disks by Gametek, required a really powerful machine and was also a big disappointment. Today, one can complain about the publishers, although extenuating circumstances must also be taken into account. The Amiga market at the time was shrinking drastically, and the widespread software piracy was the nail in the coffin of a platform that was past its glory days. Under such conditions, it was difficult to afford long-term financing of this insecure investment and paying a team that took a long time to optimize the game for the hardware.

The extenuating circumstances for the U.S. Gold and other publishers may also lie in their agreements with

Japan's Capcom, which graced the gaming world with Street Fighter. Joe Morici, vice president of Capcom USA, mentioned that the relationship with Osaka headquarters was far from a partnership. In an interview done by Game Developer, Morici mentioned that Capcom's U.S. division was tasked with buying finished products from the parent company for further sale in the U.S. market. With this approach from the Japanese executives, perhaps the reports that Capcom did not give much support to Western publishers for a long time are also true. Console owners were more fortunate in this regard. As a result, the version of SF2: The World Warrior released by Capcom itself for the otherwise Japanese Super Nintendo is considered the best 2D brawler conversion from an arcade machine, outclassing PC and home computer ports.

On the other hand, gamers did their thing anyway, and the Street Fighter series games brought them a lot of fun. Despite their apparent imperfections, a lot of time was spent on them. Perhaps this was due to the peculiar realities of the early 1990s, when many of us had a vague idea of how a given title performed on other platforms, including modern arcade machines. There were also often financial issues at play, as replacing a computer with another was by no means easy. Regardless of these circumstances, the individual parts of Street Fighter are something to which one returns with great fondness, even after several decades.

THE DIFFERENCES

Out of the characters we've come to know as Balrog, Vega, and Bison, the Japanese version had a slightly different lineup. Namely, Balrog's name was M. Bison, Vega's was Balrog, and Bison's was Vega. Confusing, right? M. Bison stood for Mike Tyson - a parody of Mick Tyson. However, the fear of lawsuits led to the name change, alongside doubts about them being suitable for each character. Since the change was so confusing, the characters were given the agreed-upon codenames of Boxer, Claw, and Dictator.

THE LEGEND

After winning a fight, each fighter has a certain line in which he comments on his victory. The lead character Ryu used to say: "You must defeat Sheng Long to stand a chance." Sheng Long referred to one of his special punches, Shōryūken, however a mistranslation gave players the impression that he was referring to a person. The Electronic Gaming Monthly magazine picked up on these speculations and, as an April Fool's joke, posted screenshots of Sheng Long, even providing a guide for making him appear in the game. Of course, this "easter egg" was impossible to access by mere mortals. All you had to do was select Ryu as your character, reach Bison without receiving any damage along the way, and then avoid the fight for 10 rounds, waiting for them to end in a draw when the timer reaches 0. Then, Bison would disappear and Sheng Long would appear in his place. Time would stop and a fight to the death would follow. The prank continued for a long time, and its power was so great that Capcom's U.S. branch reportedly contacted the Japanese headquarters to file their complaints about not being informed of the character's existence. Sheng Long also made it to the best Street Fighter characters list published by the Game Daily website. ■

Street Fighter II: The World Warrior (Amiga OCS/ECS, U.S. Gold, 1992)



Super Street Fighter II: The New Challengers (Amiga AGA, U.S. Gold, 1995)



Super Street Fighter II: The New Challengers (Amiga ECS, U.S. Gold, 1995)





The path of a 16-bit warrior



■ author: Sleeva / translation: Tomxx



EDITORIAL

Since the days of the first personal computers, games in which a hero duels or battles against endless hordes of opponents have been among the most popular forms of entertainment. If you were woken up in the middle of the night and given the task of quickly listing the iconic representatives of such games, the titles Street Fighter, Mortal Kombat, Double Dragon or Final Fight would probably ring out. Today, I'd like to make a selection from the vast array of beat 'em ups and focus on productions that don't involve monsters, robots, fireballs, teleportation or battle arenas in the afterlife or on other planets.

Traditional martial arts from the Far East, and here I am referring primarily to Japan (and a little bit of China), can be defined by the word budō (Japanese: 武道). The word is derived from a combination of two terms: bujutsu and bugei. The former describes training that focuses primarily on the physical aspects, while the latter is a term for the development of the body and mind through hard training. The origins of the new word can be traced back to the Meiji period (1868-1912) and the beginning of the Shōwa (1926-1989), when there was a need to 'spiritualise' traditional Japanese martial arts. Since the term bujutsu, which had been the most popular until then, implied training of a decidedly technical nature, it was pointed out that a term had to be found that also reflected spiritual development.



Budō is a combination of the stem bu (武: ぶ), meaning 'war' or 'warlike', and dō (道: どう; dào in Chinese), meaning 'path' or 'way'. Dō in the Japanese context is an experiential term in the sense that the practice (way of life) is the standard that verifies the validity of the discipline cultivated by the art form. Modern budō has no external enemy, only an internal one: the ego - which must be fought in order to become a better version of oneself day by day. One view is that bujutsu is the martial art we practice, while budō is the lifestyle we live and the path we follow in practising bujutsu.

Although both budō and bujutsu are used interchangeably with the term 'martial art', it is important to bear in mind a rather subtle difference. While bujutsu is concerned only with the physical part of fighting (how best/

fast/effective to defeat the enemy), budo is also concerned with the mind and how one should develop as a human being.

In 1919, the Dai Nippon Butokukai organisation, which brought together the major martial arts of Japan at the time, set its sights on modernity - focusing on gekken (Japanese sword fencing), jūjutsu (Japanese hand-to-hand combat) and kyūjutsu (Japanese archery) and began to promote kendō, jūdō and kyūdō respectively. The term budō then referred to these three disciplines. Today, the meaning of the term is much broader. It includes martial arts and sports such as aikidō, jū-kendō, karate-dō, naginata-dō, iaidō, jōdō, battōdō, shōrinji kenpō and sumō.

Although I have only focused on the Japanese meaning of the word budō in this lengthy introduction, we must not forget that martial arts from Korea, China, Thailand or Vietnam also place great emphasis on developing the mind of the future warrior.

So, returning to the well-worn path of virtual walks, let's get back to what tigers like best and take a look at some Amiga-based games that focus on shaping body and mind through the murderous training of traditional martial arts.

The Karate Kid: Part II is a brawler based on the popular 1980s film starring Ralph Macchio and Pat Morita. The game was developed by Steve Báka and Pete Lyon and released by MicroDeal in 1987 for the Amiga and Atari ST. At the time of its release, Karate Kid was probably the best brawler for the Amiga - remember that International Karate was only



available for the 8-bit Commodore at the time. At the time of its release, Karate Kid impressed with its excellent visuals and eye-catching conversion of images from film to computer graphics.

MicroDeal's production delighted gamers and was one of the titles that convinced people to switch from the old 8-bit generation to 16-bit. The Karate Kid (unfortunately with a difficulty level a little too high) went out in traditional style, giving way a year later to arguably the best karate game - IK+.



International Karate Plus is an absolute and undisputed masterpiece when it comes to a game based on traditional martial arts. It is a title in the category of games that will not disappoint us even forty years after it was programmed. The concept is simple. Three aspiring martial arts masters challenge each other in a karate match.

IK+ is, of course, a sequel to the eight-bit International Karate, with which it shares some of the gameplay, but unlike the original game, there is a third opponent in the arena from the start - a detail that may seem insignificant on the surface, but is a real game-changer in practice. When we take part in the game, we receive one or two points per hit, depending on the direction to the opponent we hit from. Every few levels we have to complete challenges, such as using a shield to deflect objects thrown at us. In the best karate tradition, our progress will be reflected by the acquisition of coloured belts: yellow,

green, purple, brown, right up to the well-deserved holy grail of martial arts - the black belt.

What makes IK+ so special? The perfect balance of difficulty levels, collisions brought to perfection where a pixel of distance makes a serious difference, the smoothness of the animation and the maintenance of real karate dueling standards - we can even be punished for avoiding a fight.

International Karate Plus is pleasing to the eye, even if the visuals in particular leave a little to be desired - the Amiga could do so much more. There is only one arena, but the fluidity of the players' movements and the reproduction of real punches and kicks are at a high level. There is also an excellent soundtrack that makes you feel like an Okinawan for a moment.



If IK+ can be considered a bit arcade-like, the next title, Budokan: The Martial Spirit, released by Electronic Arts in 1989, is a serious attempt to capture the atmosphere of Budō, bordering a little on simulator. The game focuses on four types of traditional martial arts - unarmed dueling (karate), sword fighting (kendo), long stick fighting (bo) and nunchaku fighting.



The game begins in the dojo courtyard, where we can choose to train in one of the styles, opt for a training duel with another player, or take part in a tournament where we have to defeat twelve martial arts masters.

They each have their own style, while we can choose one of the four listed above to use in a particular duel. The trick is to choose the right style for each opponent, as we can only use one style/weapon four times during the tournament. Each duel is preceded by a briefing screen that gives the player a brief description of the opponent. After three consecutive losses to the same opponent, the player must face the previous opponent again. If the player loses to the first opponent three times, the game is over.

During combat, we have two energy bars - Stamina and Ki - which force us to use different tactics. We can't press



fire as fast as possible and attack all the time, because our player will get tired too quickly. The key to victory is waiting for the right moment to inflict more damage on the enemy. Active moves such as jumping and hard hitting will reduce Ki, while blocking attacks will increase it. As a fighter's stamina decreases, the player's movements become slower, making it more difficult to act and counter effectively. The first fighter to run out of stamina loses the duel.



The graphics are fairly simple, but they do a good job of emphasising the asceticism of Far Eastern martial arts, the music is great, and the only thing that might grate for some is the speed of the gameplay - movements seem a little slow, so you won't experience the smooth animation and control of IK+. Movement in general is not very fast, so the game teaches patience and precision.

Staying in the land of cherry blossoms for a moment, we must not forget a martial art that captured the imagination of young boys in the 1980s and 1990s. We are, of course, talking about the art of ninjutsu, which has been ascribed almost magical properties. In the beautiful game *Sword of Honour*, we take on the role of a masked ninja warrior who, in ancient Japan, must save his master's honour by recovering a stolen sword.



Developed by the small Swedish studio Dynafield, the game was released for the Amiga and C64 in 1992, followed by a DOS version in 1993.

Of course, whenever the word ninja is mentioned, we are referring to the classic series of *The Last Ninja*. In the case of *Sword of Honour*, instead of an isometric view, we have the familiar 2D view as in the previously described productions. However, don't expect this game from Dynafield to be a typical platformer. The adventurous nature of the gameplay is very much developed here. There are not only weapons in the game, but also objects that we have to use to solve puzzles. Fortunately, the game

still focuses on combat, with different types of blows and smooth animations of the protagonist and his opponents. We can also use various weapons, including blaster guns, to defeat the enemies that stand in our way. Each of these is assigned to a specific location and, unfortunately, "regurgitates" when you leave the screen and return along the same path, so you need to plan your movements around the map well to avoid multiplying duels unnecessarily.

All of this is complemented by beautiful graphics, a great soundtrack and the atmosphere of ancient Japan that oozes from every pixel.

Let us now move on to the main competitors of the Japanese styles and take a moment to look at games based on Chinese martial arts, commonly known as kung fu. German developers from the Thalion Software crew (known for *Amberstar* and *Ambermoon*) released *Chambers of Shaolin* for the Amiga, C64 and Atari ST in 1989.



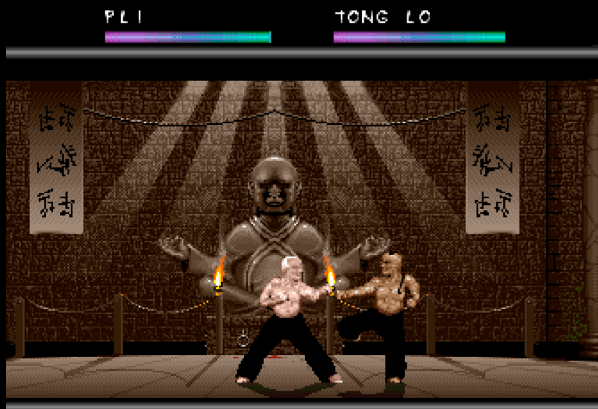
The plot is quite traditional. The Emperor's henchmen have kidnapped our hero's sister Hang Foy Qua. So the peace-loving hero has no choice but to find the monks of the Shaolin Monastery as quickly as possible in order to learn the noble art of martial arts from them. The road to revenge, however, is not all roses. Before we can face the servants of an evil ruler, we must pass six tests that will test our strength, reflexes and agility. Once all the tests have been passed, our warrior's skills must be saved to disk. Up to four other players can take the tests and they will be saved under their name.

Now it is time to deal with your opponents. But woe betide those who did not work hard during their training at the monastery: the poorer the performance, the fewer the number of blows available (twelve in total), and the poor student has much less stamina and ability to take blows than the master. Of course, you can always humbly return to Shaolin to strengthen your body and mind through hard work before returning to the path of revenge.

As far as the audio-visual experience is concerned, this is a high standard production. The detailed and colourful backgrounds will make any player's heart beat faster, and the animation of the warriors will leave you in awe. Add to this the excellent sound effects and the ability to choose from six different soundtracks, and it becomes clear just how polished *Chambers of Shaolin* is. The controls are very precise, and the collision detection is even too precise: only if you are in exactly the right position relative to your opponent do you have a chance of actually beating him! And just like in real life training, only by patiently honing your skills will you succeed.



Another offering for lovers of Chinese martial arts is the first Team17 game released for the Amiga. We are talking about Full Contact, of course - a one-on-one brawler with impressively detailed graphics and a wide range of additional training stages between lightning-fast fight scenes. Hailing from the demoscene, the game was intended to be a de facto soft sell for the PC. It was deliberately designed to remind Amiga owners why they had invested in this platform. The first example would be the game's opening animation, inspired by a scene from Kickboxer with Jean Claude Van Damme, showing a fully rotoscoped silhouette of a martial arts master practising against a beautiful sunset, all drawn in the Amiga's HalfBrite mode. To this day, this title screen remains one of the most recognisable and iconic images in Team17's history.



The story (of course there is one) is very classic - we play a warrior who must avenge his family killed by the Triad. The varied duels (we fight armed opponents and even an aggressive dog) are interspersed with training sequences, thanks to which we can increase our hero's stats. Full Contact stands out in terms of graphics, while in terms of speed it remains one of the most dynamic brawlers to date.

Finally, there are two beat-'em-up games that may not be a classic reflection of the martial arts, but they are still part of the canon, where only the strength of the muscles and the character of the player count.

Pit-Fighter is a 1990 arcade fighting game developed by Atari Games that uses digitised live actors. The animations of the player characters, opponents and audience were created using a blue background, with punches and kicks performed by real actors in front of a video camera. The game's on-screen character animations are created using actual video footage rather than rotoscopic animation.

The game features 3 playable characters: Buzz, a big and strong but rather slow wrestler; Ty, an agile kickboxing champion; and Kato, a champion with a 3rd degree black belt, although we don't know in what martial art. An interesting feature, and an innovation for the time, is the multi-storey ring - the fighters not only move from left to right, but also circulate 'in depth' around the arena, which is bounded by the audience. The crowd can get in the way, attack, throw weapons for the fighters to use or even push the player back to the centre of the arena. The heavily pixelated graphics are not as impressive today, but at the time of the game's release they were a joy to behold with the photorealism of the players.



Finally, I have left you with a jewel of martial arts - a game that is almost a simulator of a kickboxer. In Panza Kickboxing, a game bearing the name of world champion Andre Panza, we create the character of a fighter, then train him, put him in sparring sessions and finally promote him to fights in the biggest championships. When I say 'create', that's exactly what I mean. We choose special punches and skills from a list of over thirty to make our fighter unique. We train them in the gym or in the ring, for example by jumping on a skipping rope.



Training and practice are essential - without the right preparation, our career can quickly come to an end. The game has nice graphics, with smooth animations of the fighters, and a good representation of real behaviour in the ring. Punches to the head can stun us for a while, uppercuts and kicks can knock us down. Add to this a very good soundtrack and you have a sports game that is perfect.

The path of the warrior, even the virtual one, is not strewn with roses. It takes time to get better through daily training and practice. Personally, I recommend a combination of real martial arts training, which you will fall in love with, and regeneration during duels with little pixelated champions on your Amiga screen. ■



Mortal Kombat Special Moves



■ author: Skaner / translation: Tomxx



TUTORIAL

MORTAL KOMBAT is a mythical tournament organised by the sorcerer Shang Tsung, who has been trying for years to conquer the Earth Realm and subjugate its inhabitants. To do so, he must win ten times in a row. He has already won nine and he is one victory away from his goal. Prince Goro, his master, is already preparing for another triumph. There are seven fighters to choose from: Liu Kang, Rayden, Sub-Zero, Scorpion, Sonya, Kano and Johnny Cage. Each has a standard set of spectacular strikes and secret moves to defeat the wizard Shang Tsung and his master Goro. If you want to become a Mortal Kombat tournament champion, you must master my list of secret strikes. Good luck saving the earthly kingdom.

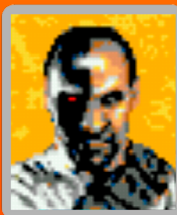
Cage is a movie star known for blockbusters such as Dragon Fist and the award-winning Sudden Violence. Trained by the great masters of Eastern martial arts, he brings his skills to the big screen. He entered the tournament because he wanted to prove to the disbelievers that he could fight.



JOHNNY CAGE

GREEN BOLT: BACK-FRONT-FIRE
SHADOW KICK: BACK-FRONT-BACK-FIRE
BALL BREAKER: DOWN-DOWN-FIRE
FATALITY: FRONT-FRONT-FRONT-FIRE (CLOSE)

Mercenary, thief, criminal, representative of the Black Dragon Clan, respected within the criminal organisation. On the run from agent Sonia Blade, Kano finds himself on a boat bound for Shan Tsung's island, where the tournament will take place.



KANO

SPIN ATTACK: FRONT-DOWN-BACK-UP
KNIFE THROW: BACK-BACK-FRONT
FATALITY: BACK-BACK-BACK-FIRE (CLOSE)

Member of the White Lotus secret society. He left the White Lotus to represent the Shaolin Monastery in the Mortal Kombat tournament. Liu is dedicated to his principles and despises Shang Tsung.



LIU-KANG

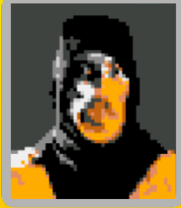
FIREBALL: FRONT-FRONT-FIRE
FLYING KICK: BACK-FRONT-FIRE
FATALITY: BLOCK-FRONT-DOWN-BACK-UP



MORTAL KOMBAT



Like Sub-Zero, his true name and origin are unknown. It is known that he belongs to the opposing ninja clan and that he hates Sub-Zero, having been sentenced to death by the Lin Kuei clan many years ago. The sentence was carried out by Sub-Zero, killing him and his family. Scorpion ended up in Hell, from where he was allowed to return to take his revenge.



SCORPION

SPEAR: BACK-BACK-FIRE

TELEPORT: DOWN-BACK-FIRE

FATALITY: BLOCK-UP-UP (1/2 SCREEN)

Known as the God of Lightning and protector of the Earth Realm. Rumour has it that he received an invitation to the tournament from Shang Tsung himself. Raiden took human form to enter the tournament.



RAYDEN

TELEPORT: DOWN-FRONT

LIGHTNING: DOWN-FRONT-FIRE

TORPEDO: BACK-BACK-FRONT

FATALITY: FRONT-BACK-BACK-FIRE (CLOSE)

The true name and identity of this fighter is unknown. However, from his costume and the markings on him, it can be inferred that he belongs to the Lin Kuei Clan, a legendary clan of Chinese ninjas.



SUB-ZERO

ICE FREEZE: DOWN-FRONT-FIRE

SLIDE: BACK-BACK-FIRE

FATALITY: FRONT-DOWN-FRONT-FIRE (CLOSE)

Sonya is a top Special Forces soldier. Her team tracked down the Black Dragon organisation to which Kano belongs. In pursuit of Kano, she ended up on an island where she was captured and imprisoned by Shang Tsung's army. Her only chance to escape was the tournament.



SONYA

RING TOSS: BACK-BACK-FIRE

LEG GRAB: DOWN-DOWN-FIRE

SQUARE FLIGHT: FRONT-BACK-FIRE

FATALITY: FRONT-FRONT-BACK-BACK-FIRE

KOMBAT

SPECIAL MOVES

4D Sports Boxing



author and translation: Leon



REVIEW

Among the many Amiga fighting games, one title stands out for its unorthodox graphics. 4D Sports Boxing, released by Mindscape more than two years before Sega's Virtua Fighter, could be considered as the first 3D fighting game. Importantly, it runs on any Amiga with 1 MB of memory.

According to the manual, 4D Sports Boxing requires at least 1 MB of RAM. Neither a hard drive nor a faster processor than the standard 7MHz MC68000 are essential, but they can add a lot to the comfort of playing this game.

Although it is possible to run this title on a computer with a minimal configuration, the game may be a disappointment. In such circumstances, the player will be forced to reduce the level of graphic detail by using the 'Sim Low' setting. But even then, the game will lack the necessary dynamics. A faster Amiga or a processor board with some Fast RAM is therefore highly recommended. The game in question was tested on two A600s, one with additional Fast RAM and the other with the Furia EC020 board. As with any 3D game, 4D Sports Boxing definitely runs better with more processing power.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

4D Sports Boxing uses polygon-based graphics, which was considered strange at the time of the game's release. It should be remembered that it was designed for 16-bit machines such as the Amiga, Apple Macintosh or Tandy 1000, which did not have hardware acceleration for 3D graphics. As a result, the number of polygons used for the boxers is low and the game as such does not match the later Virtua Fighter or Tekken, which ran on the more powerful Sega Saturn and Sony Playstation respectively. However, as a precursor to 3D fighting games, it is a remarkable achievement, as it runs quite well on older machines. The overall impression is that its graphics bear some resemblance to the CGI used in Dire Straits' famous 1985 'Money for Nothing' video clip. Nowadays, with the 80s and 90s back in full swing, some might consider this aesthetic to be very edgy.

The Amiga version of 4D Sports Boxing came out over a year before any AGA machines appeared. But even as a game for older Amiga models it only uses 16 colours, which is far below the capabilities of OCS/ECS. A bit of a disappointment, and an updated version that would use the improved AGA chipset was never released. The Amiga version of 4D Sports Boxing is therefore inferior to, for example, the Apple Macintosh port, which has up to 256 colours, but at the cost of 2,000 KB of free memory. But even with this drawback, the graphics on the Amiga are quite decent. The standard fight view (F1) mixes polygonal modelling of boxers with a bitmap arena. Other views, activated with F2-F10, show only vector graphics representing the boxers and the ring, reduced to posts and ropes. All these elements are superimposed on a black background.

The game's audio is uneven. The music theme is very nice and resembles breakdance tunes. Some of the other tunes illustrate the preparations before a fight or its outcome. There are also voice samples and fighting sound effects. During a boxing match you can hear atmospheric sounds coming from the audience. It's quite nice, but as the later FM Towns version from 1992 showed, it could have sounded better.

To summarise this part, the Amiga edition has been slightly reduced in graphics and sound to run on a standard 1MB system with an MC68000 CPU.

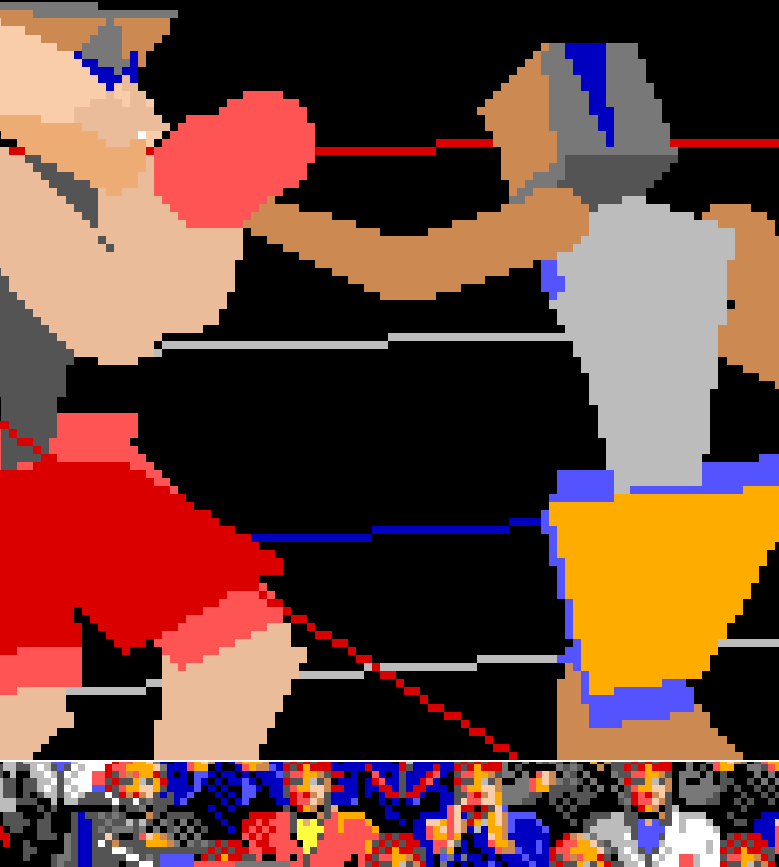
PLAYABILITY

The game used to be praised for being a pretty good simulation of boxing. You won't find any special moves in it. On the other hand, those who are keen on boxing should be satisfied with it. Although I'm not an expert, I was able to recognise many aspects of the sport in this game. The three judges and their decisions, TKOs, disqualifications,



LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!
IN THE RED CORNER, WEIGHING IN AT 100kgs
SUGAR JAY MACK!





draws and, of course, the ring announcer are some of them. Boxing enthusiasts should also be pleased with the way the body movements of the boxers are modelled here.

The ability to create your own characters, even from the predefined components offered, is really nice. The player can also develop the skills of a boxer created in this way by doing gym exercises before each championship fight. This is the path of a budding boxing star who will eventually have to challenge the famous "The Champ", a boxing champion with near-perfect skills.

It's not going to be original, but yes, 4D Sports Boxing is worth playing if only to see how good the games were back in 1991. After all, it is a 3D fighting game that even runs on small Amigas.

THE GAME'S MENU SYSTEM

As for the game's menus, let's start with the main one. It consists of the following sections

- Exhibition - allows you to take part in an exhibition match. As these fights are outside any competition, no results are recorded.
- Options - to set up the players, the input devices, the level of detail and the choice of kg/lbs. You can also set the number of rounds and their length, although these settings only apply to Exhibition mode. This panel also shows the version of the game.
- The Gym - the possibility of creating, designing and even training your own boxer, which is essential to take part in the championship. It is also a player database that stores up to ten boxers. It also contains the player export/import boxer options.

- Demo - runs a demonstration match between two computer-controlled characters.
- Main Event - starts a championship match, the result of which affects the career of a selected boxer.
- Exit - return to AmigaDOS

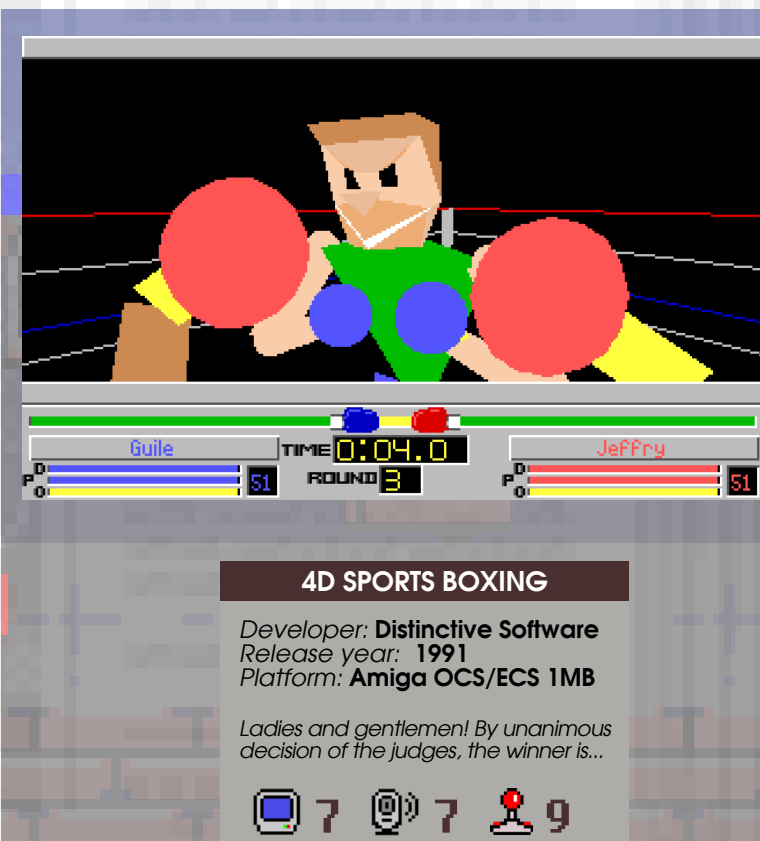
Another in-game menu called the Master Panel can also be accessed by pressing Esc during a fight. It allows the player to end a fight by throwing in the towel or to view the fight statistics.

This panel also contains a number of settings, including camera, video recording and rendering. The latter deserves more explanation. The game has the ability to automatically adjust the level of detail according to the hardware capabilities. This feature sometimes leads to unexpected changes in the graphics during combat when the CPU is temporarily overloaded. It looks like a glitch, but it is due to this default setting, which can be turned off in the Master Panel.

CONTROLS

4D Sports Boxing is designed to be played primarily with a joystick or keyboard. It also uses two fire buttons to throw punches. A boxer can be controlled solely with the keyboard, using one of two sets of keys for the left or right hand. Another option is to use a joystick with the keyboard. This is necessary because one of the Shift keys is still used as Fire Button 2. A joypad/keyboard combination can also be used, although this is less convenient.

A list of the keyboard keys and their functions available during a match is shown below. ■



Ninja in the foothills

■ author: Komek / translation: Tomxx



EDITORIAL

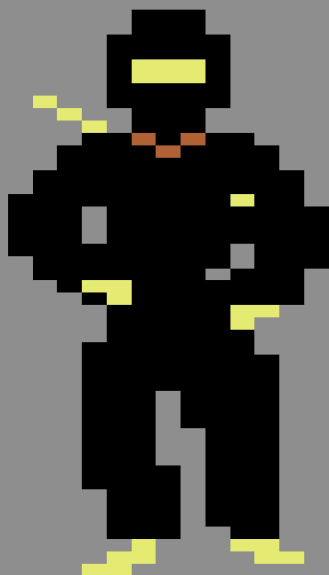
"You are sitting too close to the TV! Do you want to lose your eyesight? Get off the floor or you'll catch a cold". My God! Will these adults ever give us a break? After all, we have a dangerous mission to carry out in the Palace of Death, and they keep buzzing in our ears...

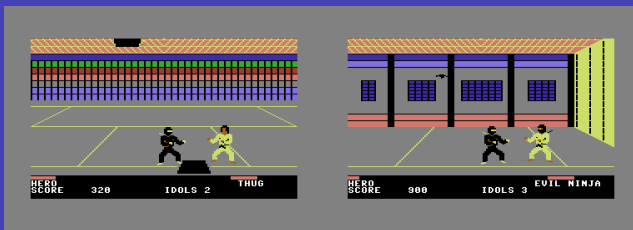
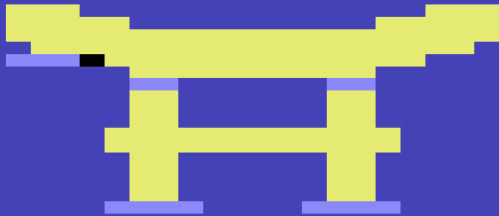
You know what? Lately I've been thinking a lot about the past and reliving moments that bring a smile to my face. Nostalgia... Oh yes, I like to indulge in it, especially when I'm having a bad day, it's the best remedy. So I'm going to tell you about a certain game that was, and still is, very important to me. I associate it with the time when computers and video games were not so widespread in Poland, which made contact with them an amazing experience. It was also the time of my carefree childhood, when everything around me surprised and fascinated me like never before. Ah... that's how it was.

The hero figure of Ninja - the first time I saw him, I couldn't take my eyes off the screen. He immediately

impressed me with his speed, agility and courage. Alone against a bunch of bad guys, that's him - mysterious in a black outfit. I didn't expect to meet him in the small foothills of Duszniki-Zdrój, Poland. It was the home of my cousin, who owned an Atari 65XE and a cassette with the Ninja game on it. I vividly remember the excitement of the moment when the hero's energy bar reached a critical state and the heartbeat quickened. We were running amok, nervously waving the joystick in all directions. Detached from reality and tightly focused, we had only one goal - to complete the mission. Some time later I had the chance to play it on my own C-64, and then I was able to fight the battle in the Palace of Death every day. Although at the time I missed the company of my cousin, who was about three hundred kilometres away.

Ninja is a combination of beat 'em up and adventure game released by MASTERTRONIC in 1986. The game's protagonist must prove his worth and courage to the Princess of the Orient by protecting her seven idols from evil ninjas, bandits and thugs. To defend himself, he uses a samurai sword, as well as shurikens and very sharp daggers that lie on the ground here and there, just begging to be picked up. He can also use his fists and feet quite well. Be careful, though, as your opponents are also pretty good fighters and might throw a dagger or shuriken at you. The Palace of Death and the area in which our hero moves around consists of 21 chambers. At the start of the game, there is one enemy in each chamber, then two, then three, then more. The Ninja game can be worked up to the point where it only takes a few minutes to get through it, but in order to reach that level of proficiency, you have to work a little first. As we all know, no pain, no gain.





Like most games from the 1980s, it was developed in several versions for different platforms. In addition to the aforementioned Atari XL/XE and Commodore 64, we should also mention PC-DOS, Arcade, Atari ST, Amiga, Amstrad CPC and ZX Spectrum. In the Amiga, Atari ST and Arcade versions, the game was released under the name "Ninja Mission". It is well known that each of these machines has different graphics and sound capabilities. However, I have found that the spirit of Ninja remains the same no matter what platform you run it on. Unfortunately, although I was a frequent visitor to a local arcade in the 1980s, I never got to play Ninja Mission on an arcade machine. In more or less similar mood, I can only recall Kung-Fu Master and Karate Champ games that kept me occupied all day and sucked up hundreds of coins. I'm sure a similar situation would occur with a Ninja arcade machine. Now all we have to do is install the MAME emulator and imagine we're in an arcade room from those days. I think that each of you has a game, and probably more than one, that brings back fond memories. It's worth sharing them, to get away from the reality that surrounds us, just to dream for a while. ■

Ninja on the Atari XL

I have to admit that I have a great fondness for the Atari 65XE version. No wonder, after all, that's where my adventure with the fearless ninja warrior began.



A Pig Quest

■ author and translation: Monika



REVIEW

My name is Frank, Frank Further, and like my grandfather and father, I have never left Porkville. In fact, ever since the four statues of wellness were stolen long ago, none of the pigs living in the settlement have left it. They have all become somehow numb and indifferent, and words such as adventure, curiosity and bravery have completely disappeared from the pig vocabulary. I was born in Porkville and will probably make my living there without leaving the valley. Admittedly, we've got great pastures here, fruit trees, lots of greenery and even a pond, just those annoying flies and mosquitoes... Sometimes I chase them off pretty well, like now, oh, and what's that cave?



Monika

I eagerly awaited this production and genuinely enjoyed it. The game has a beautiful graphic design. Every chamber we visit looks great and is rich in detail, the levels are varied and the characters, although usually small, are very nicely animated. Added to this are the impressively drawn static intermission screens.



The sound design is also top-notch, the music is pretty well matched to the level and is catchy. In a nutshell, the audio-visual setting did a great job of filling the space on the 1MB cartridge.

As for the gameplay itself, it is dynamic and difficult. At times, it is even extremely difficult. Even on the lowest difficulty level, there are times when you see a vial of healing liquid on the screen and want to be right there.

The main reason for this is the often respawning enemies, but fortunately not all of them revive. For some, this will be a huge disadvantage, for others it will be an advantage, extending the play time. Either way, it ensures that there is never a moment to get bored, and with each playthrough we learn where not to waste our weapons by skilfully evading enemies.

A very cool addition is the energy gauge of the enemies and the names of each chamber, which will sometimes play the most important role when you are stuck not knowing what to do next.

The C64 gets great games every year, but rarely as extensive and polished as this one. It's just a pity that, as announced by author Antonio Savona, this is his last game for this computer. Highly recommended!

A Pig Quest is a platform game with adventure elements, in which we direct the fate of the pig Frank. He has to... actually he doesn't have to do anything. He has no task, he just follows the insects and falls into a cave, and since he cannot get out of it the same way, he moves forward, gradually discovering the game's plot.

In addition to the standard running, jumping and ducking, Frank can also use weapons and clothing. At the beginning, he only has his cutlass at his disposal, which doesn't do much damage to enemy creatures. Although Porkville's enemies had access to better weapons in the numerous chests scattered here and there, they were so clumsy that they lost the keys to them. Once Frank finds and uses them to open the chests, he can find much better weaponry in them in the form of a short or long sword, or a hammer, with which he can dispose of enemies much more efficiently. In addition to weapons, the chests also contain various types of armour, which seem to be necessary to overcome certain chambers.

Both combat tools and armour have a life span, so Frank must use them sparingly in order to keep them in good condition for as long as possible.

In addition to keyed-up finds, our pig protagonist will also encounter those left behind by enemies in the form of energy-renewing food, as well as special items he can use in the right places.

The latter are quite an important adventure element in the game - to open the next paths you will have to use levers, plant a flame in the right place or use other elements of the environment to get to a place that is inaccessible at first glance.



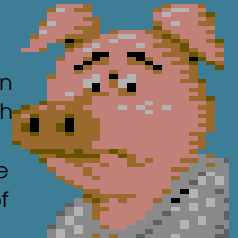


The easy-to-read HUD is very helpful during gameplay. In addition to the standard score counter, it also informs you of the weapons wielded by the main character, his currently donned armour, the special item currently being carried and the status of your keys and statues of wellness.

The status bar also features something that was often missing from C64 games, namely the energy bar of the currently attacked enemy, which indicates whether you hit them at all and how much life they have left in them. The last and in fact the most important factor shown on the screen is the time remaining to complete the current level. Below the information bar is also the name of each chamber, which occasionally scrolls to show useful hints.



Razor



It's really been a long time since I've been so enthralled by a C64 game as I was with A Pig Quest. From the very beginning, when the intro is displayed, you can hope for an interesting story. The first seconds of playing only confirm this belief. The control of the piglet is great, the whole time it feels like it is walking and stops exactly where you want it to.

Monka mentioned the respawning enemies, this actually makes the game more difficult, but it's a good idea nonetheless, as there's a bit of wandering around the various screens (200 screens in 5 worlds), so you often have to go back to where you've already been. If there was no respawn such wandering would be monotonous.

SID also has something to do here, as there are 30 (or even more) different tracks sewn into the game. The graphics squeeze the maximum out of our machine, it is colourful, there is a lot going on, sometimes it rains, sometimes the sun shines. If this text is read by the author of the game, listen to me and do not stop creating more successful games such as A Pig Quest. This game is a must-have for every commodore and preferably on a cartridge!





The game offers five sprawling levels with varied ambient graphics and enemies to defeat in three different difficulty levels. The production runs on a standard C64, but is also able to take advantage of the benefits of extensions: running on a C128 will take advantage of the higher CPU clock to switch between game screens faster, and using an REU will do so even faster. Running the game with the memory expansion, however, will prevent the game's progression and best-score table from being saved. ■



Louie

It didn't take me long to appreciate the overall sense of quality within A Pig Quest. The game is a work of art - from its beautifully drawn graphical art and effects through to the huge high quality SID soundtrack, A Pig Quest comes close to setting a new benchmark when it comes to production values.

However, the game's difficulty curve is set too high and this is predominately to do with the fact that most enemies are constantly respawning... Arrgh! I agree with Razor's observation that there is a need for some respawning as the game risks being a little dull without it but still I would have preferred if more thought had gone into the design of the levels to avoid the need to resort to this irritating feature.

Difficulty aside, the non-linear nature of the game design along with its puzzle elements are effective in making A Pig Quest feel larger than it actually is. The game is well executed across the board and I must admit to finding the experience somewhat addictive.

Unlockable saved levels is a god-send (but should apply to Easy mode as well), the use of scrolling text to help push the story narrative forward is effective and the easter egg type rewards when you perform certain actions is certainly a nice touch. I do like how the story narrative evolved towards the end of the game.

A Pig Quest is a watershed moment for the C64 for its production values. While the actual gameplay doesn't quite hit the same high, I have no reservation in recommending A Pig Quest to all C64 gamers.

A PIG QUEST

Developer: **Piggy 18 Team**
 Publisher: **Protovision**
 Release year: **2023**
 Platform: **C64**

Oink, Oink!

9,5 @ 10 9

Dagon's Awakening

GameDev story

■ author: Łukasz Bobrecki / translation: Tomxx

Is it possible to become a game developer without knowing anything about programming, drawing graphics or creating music? With the right team of friends, anything is possible.

I am involved in game publishing as a hobby. You might have heard of Bobr.games. That's me - I spend my evenings asking game authors if they'd like to see their creations in a boxed edition, then copy and paste the descriptions from their website into a word processor so I can print out some instructions, and then put them together with the cartridge or cassette in a coloured cardboard box.

One day it occurred to me that at least one of the games I publish should be at least partly my own. But what could a person with no experience in game development do? First idea: learn to code. Second idea: find a team to help. Getting a team together seemed much more attractive to me.

I began my search by analysing the games published by my small company. The aim was to find one that could be used as a basis for modification. I immediately ruled out all arcade titles, because I was afraid that they would just be a series of new levels. I also considered doing something with SEUCK, but felt that this tool had already been exploited enough. Even Richard Bayliss gave up running the annual SEUCK Compo a few years ago. I had to decide on one of two categories of games: puzzle or adventure. Then it was time to find a team.

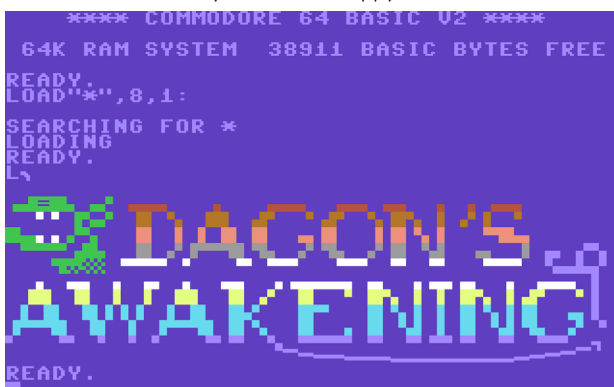
The 'Space Collection' cartridge contained both the puzzle game 'Space Planters' and the adventure game 'Babylon's Ark'. Interestingly, Vintage Computing Carinthia was responsible for both of these productions. My contact to this group was Logiker, whom you may know as the author of the texts for 'K&A+'. After a few messages, it turned out that an engine had been created for 'Babylon's Ark' that could be used to create a completely new adventure. Playing this title, I had a lot of fun controlling Cadet Samuel Fox and solving the problems he encountered on his space station. It didn't take me long to realise that it was just as much fun to spend time

working on a new collaborative project with the talented members of the VCC group.

It was time to plan what the game would be about and to present the team with an outline for a new adventure. At the time, one of the ideas for the next collection of cartridge games was to go underwater. The underwater adventure immediately led me to the sunken city of R'lyeh, where the eternal Cthulhu has waited for eons to awaken, lost in his blasphemous dreams. To get into the right frame of mind, I started by re-reading the short stories 'The Call of Cthulhu' and 'The Phantom Over Innsmouth' by H.P. Lovecraft. Then I persuaded a group of friends to dust off their boxes of 'Eldritch Horror' and 'Sign of the Elder Gods' board games, both based on Cthulhu mythology. Looking through the cards from these games was going to be my main source of puzzle inspiration. Unfortunately, most of the events in these games had nothing to do with underwater adventures. The above games, in their complexity, feature items that can be obtained by the player and giant beasts that try to rob the brave adventurers of what is left of their sanity. As you know, adventure games are based on objects and obstacles, so I took some ideas from these cards.

The initial list of puzzles to be included in the game consisted of around thirty items. Some of these were classic locked door puzzles, or tasks that involved getting items from one character to another. Not to be too schematic, I planned to add something to the game that would require more than just trying everything on everything, or actually clicking on all the available dialogue options. This something was to be the manuscript. It was to be a small booklet or single page filled with notes and atmospheric scribbles. The player would be tasked with finding hidden text, guessing coordinates, or spotting that a set of lines was actually a map. Over time, the idea of the manuscript became less and less relevant. Our game engine, unlike the classic adventure game, was based

▼ A nice addition only found in the floppy version



▼ The effect of the auto-correction on the game title



EDITORIAL

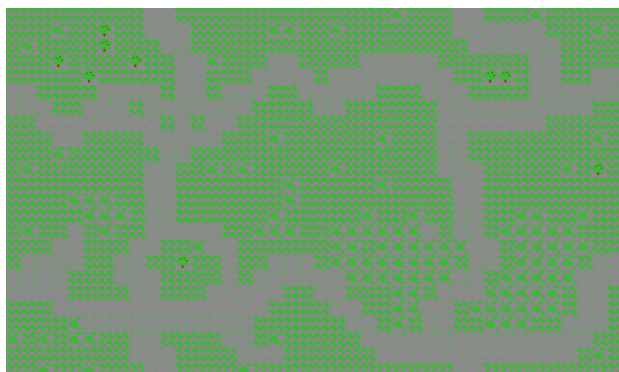
on dialogue rather than objects. The game does allow you to look at the contents of a bag, but the use of items is always in the form of textual interaction, either with the character or with the item. An external source of knowledge was not necessary and in some situations impossible to implement. For example, in order to ask the player for a decrypted word, it had to be provided in a drop-down list in the dialogue. It would probably have been possible to add the ability to enter the text manually, but we chose not to. Finally, an item called a manuscript was included in the game, but it has no physical counterpart as originally planned. Instead, a postcard containing several clues was included in the cartridge box. All the puzzles can be solved without them, but some require trial and fail. It is possible to link the clues on the postcard to what you see on the screen, so in a sense the goal has been achieved. I wonder how many players have linked the notes on the postcard to the puzzles.

I do not claim that the addition of physical cues was my original idea. A similar solution has certainly been used before. My immediate inspiration was the collector's edition of the game 'Athnanor' by Safar Games. The boxed version included physical extras such as a sealed letter or cards that could lead the player to the solution of certain puzzles.

The element I wanted to include in the game from the beginning was the maze. Initially, it was going to be a series of identical screens, with only one of the four exits being correct. Choosing the wrong exit meant reappearing before entering the maze. Without the help of the aforementioned manuscript, it would have been necessary to draw the map by hand or to memorise a long sequence of correct steps. As the extra screens did not take up as much memory space, the whole maze ended up being made up of unique locations, which I think makes it easier to remember the correct route. The need to know the correct path remained. A hint for the player: this is one of the locations that can be passed on the first try, if the clue is found.

An important asset of any game is the motivation to complete it again. While for any arcade production you can offer more difficulty levels or introduce random elements, for story-based games the only solution, in my opinion, is to offer multiple paths to the finale. Obviously, my aim was that Dagon's Awakening should not be shelved after the first playthrough, which is why three different endings are included. In addition, at some point in the game, you have to make a decision that affects the course of the story to some extent, and also changes some of the puzzles.

▼ The map of an island

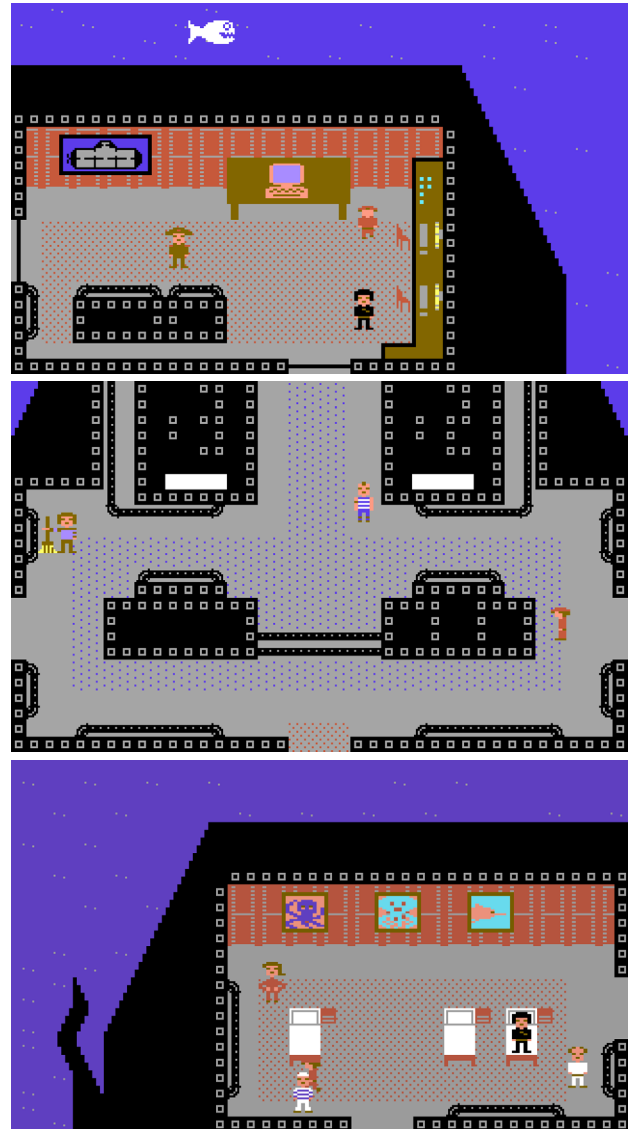
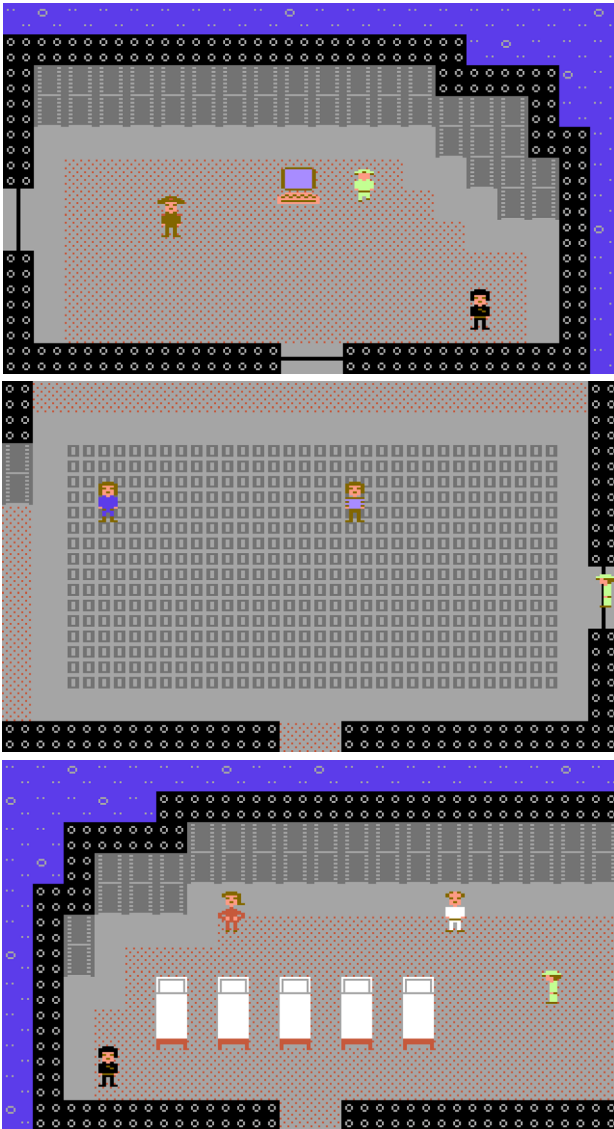


Originally, the game was going to be called 'Ritual in R'lyeh' and consist of two separate parts. The idea to split it was due to my concern that it would be impossible to fit all the ideas into the limited memory. However, it turned out that the compression algorithm Wil chose was good enough to fit everything into one file. The title was changed for two reasons. The final quest in the game was to be a ritual; this required deciphering the magic formula in the manuscript and placing the objects in the right places, which was a huge amount of work. What went wrong with the manuscript I have already mentioned, and the arrangement of the objects appears elsewhere. As the ritual was shallow, it could be dropped from the title. We also felt that the name 'R'lyeh' might be too complicated for people unfamiliar with Lovecraft's mythology. It's hard to pronounce and even harder to remember. The progenitor of Awakening was supposed to be Dagon, not Cthulhu, so we decided to use his name in the title. Unfortunately, the same problem arose as with the name R'lyeh. Due to misunderstandings, the name of the Eternal was regularly changed to a dragon (Dragon), one of the graphics shows the first version of the game logo crafted with this typo. Unfortunately, I am responsible for this error myself, as I did not notice that the autocorrect had added the letter 'r' when I wrote to Raffox, who created the aforementioned graphic for us. Since the difficulty of proper names is part of the atmosphere of Lovecraft, I decided that the submarine would sail to the sunken island of Y'ha-nthlei.

If I had to say what took the most time during the development of the game, I would say testing. When writing the subsequent dialogues and flagging what to change when choosing certain answers, each line of conversation had to be tested to make sure that an unwanted loop didn't appear and a minor typo didn't cause the protagonist to use a bottle of vodka instead of a rope. Of course, there is more to our game than text and plot. The graphic design was overseen by Logiker, who bravely made successive corrections to room layouts and character designs. If you like the look of the characters, the design of the island, or the paintings hanging in the ship, you have him to thank. When we started, I assumed that the raw, empty spaces were part of the artistic idea. But Logiker surprised me again and again with new details. One day there were paintings on the walls, another day an elegant desk and the next day fruit on the kitchen table. You might say that these are small things, but these are the kind of elements that definitely add character to the game. Anyway, have a look at the screenshots comparing the first versions with what is finally in the game.

The previous game created on the VCC engine, "Babylon's Ark", had almost no soundtrack, with only one room featuring music. In contrast, 'Dagon' has a full soundtrack, thanks to Emre (DeMOSic). Again, as time went on, it became clear that there was much more music to be included in the game than just a single track. The final version of the game has a total of four sid tunes. This means that players should not have to complain about the looping music for too long. Unless, of course, they get stuck on a puzzle and the atmospheric sounds, instead of helping, take away the rest of their sanity. If you like the soundtrack, Emre has made the soundtrack to 'Dagon's Awakening' and 'Jitnog' available on csdb. dk - <https://csdb.dk/release/?id=225499>.

▼ Changes to the graphical layer of the game by Logiker; on the left an older version, on the right a newer one



The last but not least member of the core team was Wil, responsible for programming. It was thanks to his talent that the engine was created, allowing content to be easily edited without the need for special technical knowledge. He also regularly added improvements to make the underwater adventure even better. An NPC hiding behind a desk? We add an animation. Want the player to know if the ship is sailing or moored? Changed the behaviour of the marine fauna. Have we found an error? Text correction needed? Wil rushes in to help.

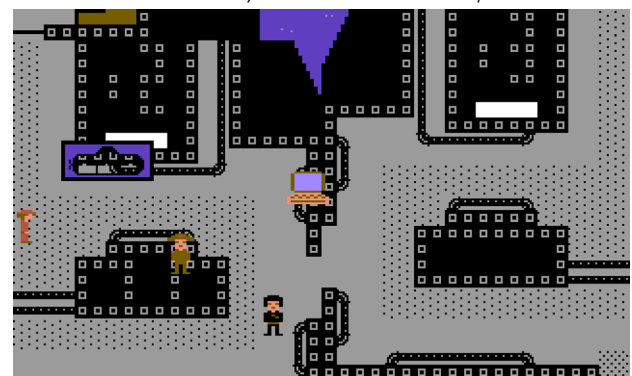
What I remember most about working with the VCC guys was their communication skills and ability to meet deadlines. I could be sure that if any member of the team said they would deliver something on Monday, they would deliver it. We used Discord for ongoing communication. Usually it was just text, but if there was an issue that needed to be discussed, it was easier to get together on a voice connection and work out a live solution to the problem. Interestingly, the release of the game on cartridge did not stop work on the game. It did cause a hiatus of a few weeks, but by the time you read this, a digital version of the game, slightly improved over the cartridge version, is now available at <https://frodewin.itch.io/dagons-awakening>.

Right from the start you will notice that the start screen of my design has been replaced by professional Errazking

graphics. Also, all the clues on the postcard have been implemented into the game.

Creating a game, even for last century's hardware, is a task that requires a lot of work. However, with a close-knit team and tools that are easy to use, it is possible to make the process enjoyable. Sure, there are times when it can feel like a 'boring chore', especially when you have to test the final version several times. But when, after sharing your creation with the world, you get a comment that someone enjoyed spending time on a game you put your heart and soul into, that is the best reward. ■

▼ You never know what you will see after a small update





C64 fighting games

The Cassette Compilation no 10

■ author: Tomasz „RAZOR” Kaniecki / translation: Tomxx



EDITORIAL

As I was rummaging through my wardrobe, I noticed a famous (at least in Poland) compilation of fighting games marked with the number 10, so I decided to bring back memories and describe it for you.

The compilation contains 20 games, which are listed below. I didn't manage to play them all, as time had taken its toll on the tape, and playing with a screw-driver was of little use. But what I did play is mine!

The contents of the compilation 10 games

Ninja Master
Bruce Lee
Pole Fight
Samurai Karate
Kung-Fu
Ushi
I-Karate 2
Legend of Kage
International Karate 1
International Karate 2
Samurai Trilogy
Karate
Usagi Yojimbo
Last Ninja
Shaolin Road
Samurai
Bangkok Knight
Big Trouble
Karate Champion
Wild Streets

As you can see, the list of games is encouraging enough to spend at least half of your Saturday honing your martial arts skills. I turned my attention to eight titles that had me hooked for the long haul.

1. BRUCE LEE

Hundreds of reviews have been written about this game. I think the vast majority of you, if you haven't played it, are at least familiar with it. It's not a karate game, but rather a chamber game that rides the wave of Bruce's popu-

larity. Still, we are kicking sumo wrestlers and black ninjas, so it can be broadly categorised as that type of game. There's something about it that, when you come back to it after 20 years, it's still a pleasure to play, punching your opponents in the face and jumping here and there.



2. UCHI MATA

Here we have something completely different. Uchi Mata is a very technical game and can be difficult to get to grips with at first. As a novice judoka, we try to defeat



successive opponents in competitions in order to win successive belt colours. In the game, we have to grab an opponent in the right way and throw them over our shoulder effectively. It seems simple enough, but believe me, I found myself twisting the joystick in all directions just to catch my opponent. Despite the initial difficulty, the game is interesting and addictive. And if any of you have ever practised judo in the school gym, I highly recommend giving Uchi Mata a try (the two-player mode is even better!).

3. LEGEND OF KAGE

A legendary game! Not only because of the title, but also because it was memorable for many players and I definitely enjoyed returning to it. I remember that I also had a port of it for the Pegasus, which looked worse than the C64 version, but was still very playable. In the game, you control a young ninja warrior whose goal is to rescue a princess from the hands of an evil mandarin. There are hundreds of enemies to defeat, hundreds of trees to flank, hundreds of shurikens and other tools to throw at enemies. There is no obvious reference to karate, but the action is reminiscent of a good karate film.



SCORE 0001000 LIVES ♥ HI 0000000

4. INTERNATIONAL KARATE

Another legendary title in which we fight an opponent in various locations around the world. New York and Sydney are among them. The iconic character in the game is a grey-haired master with a stick who keeps a close eye on the fighters and judges the duels. I cannot count the number of hours my friend and I have spent playing this game. The karate moves are varied, the duels are dynamic and the game itself - I don't know why - always reminds me of the films starring Jean-Claude van Damme. Good graphics and a dose of humour (ah, the old master) made this one of the better karate games I've played.



5. SAMURAI TRILOGY

The next item on the tape is the Samurai Trilogy. It is well known that the life of a samurai is not an easy one. We begin by assigning points to the various skills of our young adept. We will be able to fight selected opponents in karate or kendo style. After each fight, we can reallocate skill points to prepare for the next opponent. All this to win the title of champion. The idea of the game itself is fine, but the question of its execution has caused a lot of excitement in its time. The difficulty can also be frustrating. But maybe you want to check it out by yourself?

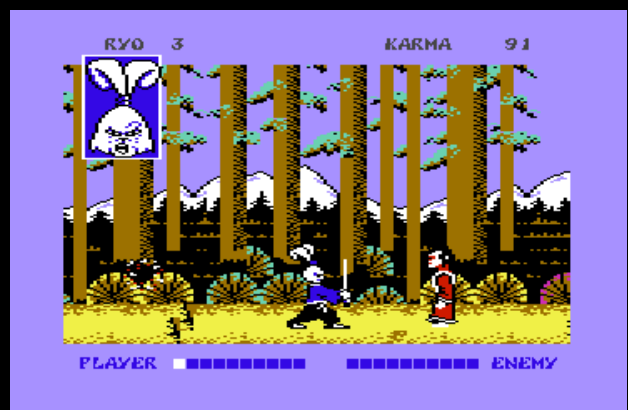


Hit Return To Exit.

6. SAMURAI WARRIOR

This title was a must-have in the box. Usagi Yojimbo is an excellent game based on the well-known comic about the adventures of a (rabbit? hare?) who leads an interesting life as a samurai. The game was released on many platforms; the one on the C64 may not be graphically outstanding, but it certainly has its flavours. So our Usagi travels around Japan in a tasteful kimono. He can bow to the people he meets, but when necessary, he will draw his sword to preach social justice.

Samurai Warrior - The Battles of Usagi Yojimbo took up a lot of my time when I was younger. This was still the case when I got back to this compilation. And I already know that I will load this game again soon.



7. SHAO-LIN'S ROAD

Another legendary game from the Konami stable. I remember my first contact with the C64 when a friend got his computer and invited me over for an evening play session. There is still something in Shao-Lin's Road that draws you in like a magnet. The story is poor, and some people have complained about the graphics, but... what

a pleasure it is to travel through each location and defeat the enemies of the gang of three. As well as kicks, we also have magical abilities at our disposal. Interestingly, enemies do not die after receiving our blows, but are stunned, so be quick when exploring the boards and push forward without a moment's hesitation.



8. WILD STREETS

The last game is Wild Streets. It's a bit of an odd game, as I don't see it listed on my tape, so it's probably some sort of compilation bonus. Out of curiosity, I loaded it up and decided to give it a try. So we wander our hero through successive levels, defeating waves of enemies, with the aim of freeing the leader from the hands of the terrorists. As well as melee combat, our equipment includes a pistol and... a panther! Yes, our hairy companion can inflict painful bites on enemies to help us reach our goal. Karate may be in short supply here, but Wild Streets certainly fits the bill as a walking brawler.



Time to bring this modest review to a close. Games with a broad karate theme were generally frowned upon by our parents. They could be accused of promoting violence or antisocial ways of solving problems on the estate. But they could not be accused of being a pastime that allowed us to bond with our friends, meet up after school for martial arts tournaments, or simply smash more enemies from the right side of the screen together. And although they are now more likely to elicit a smile than a laugh (when compared to modern games), I believe they were, and still are, a must-have for any Commodore fan. ■

Games not included in compilation #10, but worth worth mentioning (and playing):



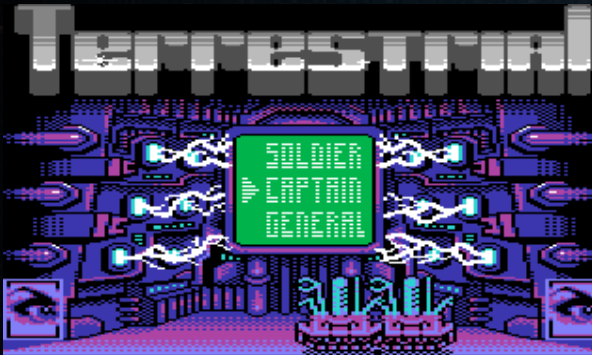
Terrestrial

■ author: Tomasz „RAZOR” Kaniecki / translation: Ari

This is Captain Havoc. I hear you loud and clear. I know there is no turning back now, I must defend our world from the alien hordes. I am humanity's last hope...

So begins Terrestrial, a new game from ICON64 in the sci-fi action-adventure genre, published by Psytronik. Encouraged by the atmospheric cover, I decided to buy this game and share my impressions with you.

The game is divided into 6 stages, and right from the start I have to admit something: despite sincere intentions and many attempts, I only managed to complete the 4th stage. But one step at a time.



I will try not to spoil anything and just talk about what awaits you in the next levels. And there are a lot of adventures and emotions.

The first stage is very simple. Our task is to carry out the procedure for launching the rocket from the base. Think of it as a warm-up before the real challenges. The second stage takes us to the gun station to fend off an attack by some nasty aliens. Interestingly, this level doesn't end once you've destroyed the last flying saucer. If you want to survive the next waves of incoming aliens, you need to find the weak points of the big cruisers and destroy them before their cannons hit your ship. Believe me, this stage alone will make you sweat like a pig.

What awaits us in level three? You may remember Luke Skywalker's breakneck raid on the surface of the Death Star. That's the association that came to mind when I reached this three-dimensional stage. A frantic chase



through a canyon near an alien-occupied city is a big challenge. Our vehicle is moving at high speed, we have to dodge photon mines scattered here and there, and shoot at enemy vehicles coming from the opposite direction.

If you survive the 'death race' that the creators have given us, you move on to the next, fourth stage, the battle in the city. Again, you can see the inspiration for one of the legendary titles on the Commodore - Cabal. This stage gave me the most grief. It's possible that the joystick (or my reflexes, or rather the lack of them) was to blame. Captain Havoc moved too slowly to avoid the onslaught of the nasty aliens and their drones. Laser beams and other deadly gadgets came at me from all sides, killing me in no time.

Legend has it that the next stage involves a battle of armoured vehicles and the destruction of alien shield generators. After that, there's a skirmish with guards and finally a battle with the boss - a big, nasty alien brain that's orchestrating all the mayhem.

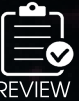


Time to summarise. Graphically, the game looks very good. There was nothing that bothered me while destroying alien creatures. The variety of levels makes you feel like you are playing not one, but at least 6 different games. Each level is graphically different and brilliantly executed. Musically, the game is also up to the task, the themes are interesting and fit the scenes that follow. As for my feelings about the controls, as I said before, Havoc is perhaps too slow to react to joystick movements, making it easy to lose a life. However, the game is worth spending 5 dollars on, especially as it is multiplatform (you can play it on the C64, the VICE and the C64 mini/maxi). I sincerely recommend it to all defenders of the Earth! I also invite you to post your opinion about the game on our site. ■

TERRESTRIAL

Developer: Trevor Storey
Release year: 2023
Platform: C64

Captain Havoc, are you still there?



Zeta Wing 2

■ author: Louie Dimovski



REVIEW

Having eradicated those strange mutant creatures just only three years ago, the blasted alien beings are back trying to take over our Earth once again and this time they really mean business. Well, it's time to strap into our Zeta Wing fighter one more time and end this infestation for good...the world needs a hero and that hero is you!



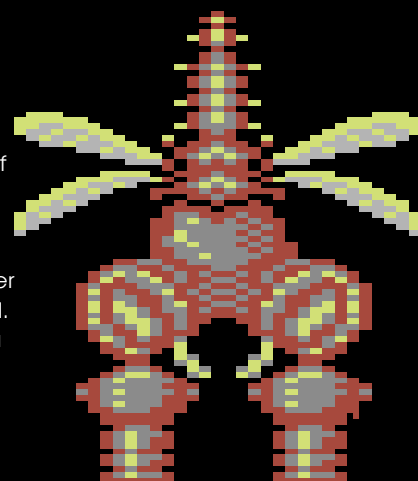
Zeta Wing 2 is a vertical shoot'em up featuring 7 stages, each with their own graphical style presented with great amount of detail, colour and multiple layers of parallax scrolling.

Blasting letter symbols will grant you extra points, which will come in handy as you are awarded a bonus life for every 50,000 points. Destroying entire enemy waves results in a star being dropped - collect 9 stars to power up your weapon. If you lose a life then your weapon system is only knocked down by one level.

If all this sounds quite similar to the first Zeta Wing to you then you're not far off from knowing what the game offers. At first, it didn't feel like there was anything new really added to Zeta Wing 2. It kind of felt that just the background graphics and attack patterns were re-arranged. But there are incremental improvements to the sequel. A smart bomb has been added, along with multiphase boss battles that do make the end of level combat with the large aliens more enjoyable. When you get to the fourth stage, things start to feel more fresh with some new impressive graphic backgrounds and greater sophistication with the enemy attack waves.

One thing that hasn't improved is the soundtrack. The tunes are not bad in their own right but I don't think they are suitable for a shoot'em up. Further, they sound like they are recycled versions of music used from Sarah's previous games and for those of you who played The Briley Chronicles quite extensively, you will double-check yourself to confirm what game you're playing at times.

Overall, Zeta Wing 2 delivers pure and simple arcade blasting fun. In its own right, Zeta Wing 2 is a high quality shooter with a vast amount of graphical variety, well balanced difficulty and enjoyable boss battles. I'd love to see more than the 7 levels on offer but what is there is very good. If you like Zeta Wing then you can't go wrong with Zeta Wing 2. ■



ZETA WING 2

Developer: **Witchsoft**
Release year: **2023**
Platform: **C64**

More of the same arcade blasting fun





REVIEW

Tai Chi Tortoise

■ author: Łukasz Bobrecki / translation: Tomxx

Turtles and tortoises may look similar, but they belong to different species. For someone who doesn't specialise in fauna (like me), it's enough to know that turtles live in the water and tortoises live on dry land. After a brief scientific introduction, it is time to move on to the main subject of this article: Tai Chi Tortoise, a game released in 1991 by Zeppelin Software for the Commodore 64 and ZX Spectrum.

At the beginning of the last decade of the last century, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles was a popular brand. It seemed obvious that Tai Chi Tortoise, a game about a similar species with martial arts in its title, would be a clone of the well-known beat-em-up. Unfortunately, Zeppelin's tortoises are very peaceful animals who avoid violent means to achieve their goals. The game's protagonist has more in common with a slightly older 8-bit character - Dizzy. Both have a round shell (fragile egg versus rough turtle) that can carry several items. The gameplay mechanics of Tai Chi Tortoise also have something in common with the famous egg series, as it is a platform adventure game. I'll say it now - it's not as good as Dizzy.

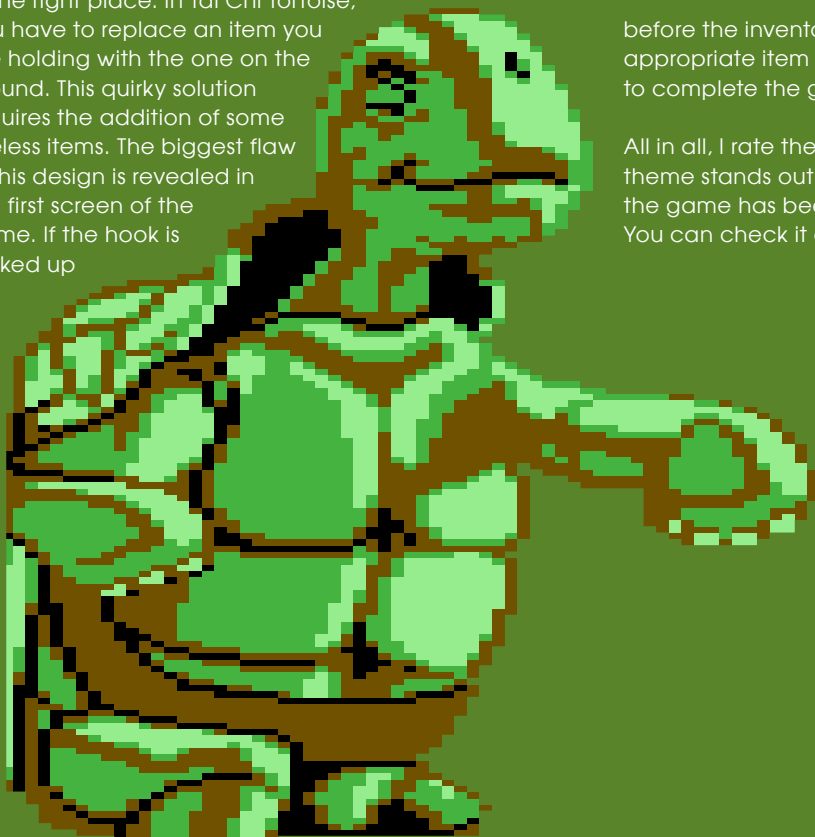
As for the platforming elements, the game can be quite fun. There are plenty of enemies with different patterns of movement to challenge a player's manual dexterity. Obstacles and enemies are almost always placed in the most inconvenient places. To make matters worse, when you lose a turtle, your new life begins at a predetermined starting point, not where you died. The game does nothing to distinguish itself from the usual platforming, but even this part of the gameplay has no major flaws.

The same cannot be said for the adventure elements, which are, in my opinion, very poorly designed. As usual, items in the protagonist's 'bag' can be used via a special menu, a button or automatically when the player is in the right place. In Tai Chi Tortoise, you have to replace an item you are holding with the one on the ground. This quirky solution requires the addition of some useless items. The biggest flaw in this design is revealed in the first screen of the game. If the hook is picked up



before the inventory is full, there is no way to place the appropriate item next to the monk, making it impossible to complete the game.

All in all, I rate the game as average. Only the main theme stands out in my opinion. Every other aspect of the game has been done better in other productions. You can check it out, but don't expect too much. ■



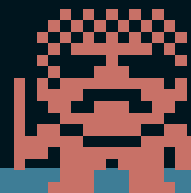
TAI CHI TORTOISE

Publisher: **Zeppelin Games**
Release year: **1991**
Platform: **C64**

It's more eggshell than ninja turtle



A Két Zsivány (The Two Rogues)



■ author: Komek / translation: Ari



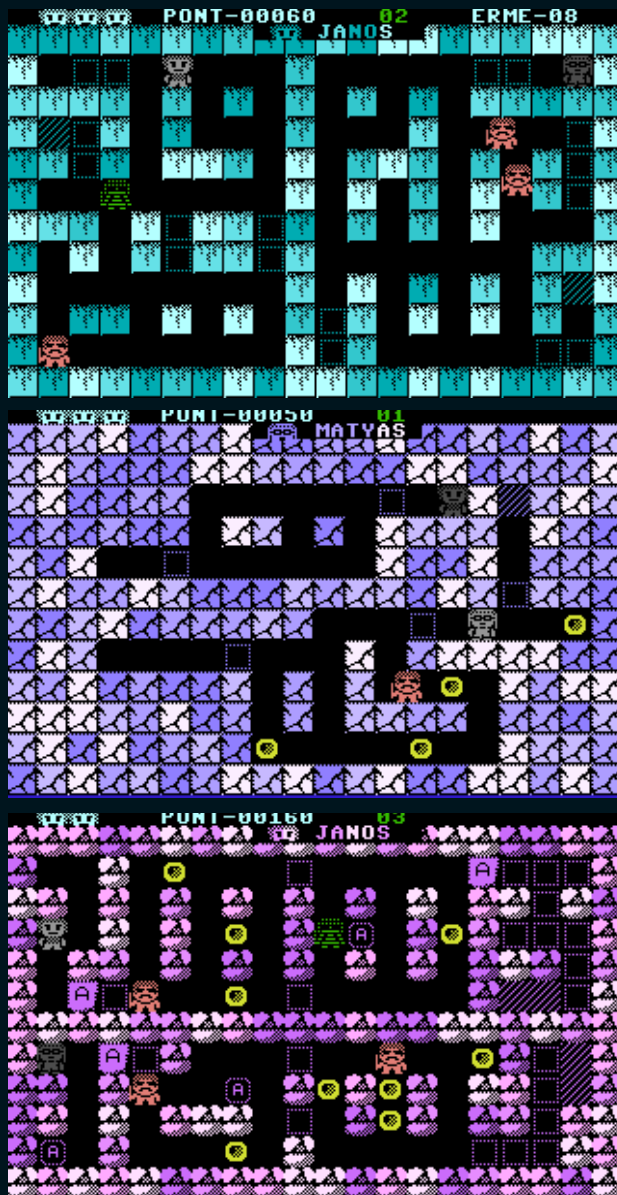
REVIEW

It's almost midnight, I have to get up for work in the morning, and here I am having a party with two villains. Finally, it's fun, we collect gold coins and escape from the stupid guards. Uh, our adrenaline is through the roof, because the guards seem to have no mercy, but we will do our job anyway!

Matyas and Janos - that's the name of the rogues I'm partying with right now. We traverse confusing mazes in search of gold coins, but the most important thing is to always lead these two guys to the exit. It is not as easy as it looks. You can't control two at once, because this isn't a two-player party. You switch control from one villain to the other with the spacebar. This isn't a problem at the start of the game, but in later stages there are blocks marked with the letter A that block and unblock the passage. For example, if Matyas is blocked, only Janos can unblock it, and vice versa. This involves pressing the spacebar a lot, but you have to be very careful as there are these angry guards running around the maze...

The party grows and grows, and I haven't mentioned something very important yet: the doors to the next levels. They appear in the form of squares marked with diagonal lines. When the lines become movable, we can lead our villains there. There is one more thing to add: the doors only open when all the coins have been collected in a particular maze. Sometimes there is only one coin in the maze and you have to flip it several times to open the passage.

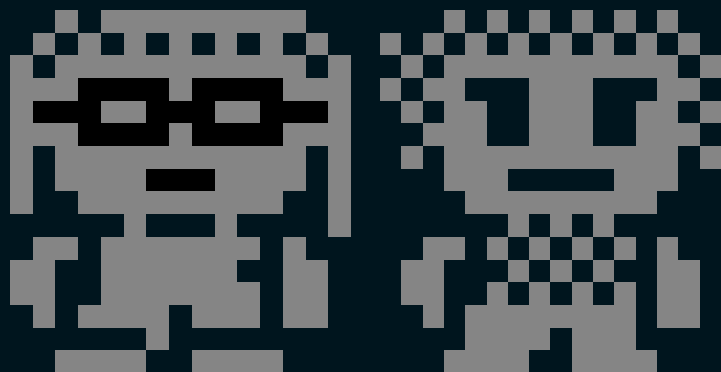
Oh boy, it's almost two in the morning! It's time to call it a night and go to bed, but before I do, I'd like to share my impressions. Believe it or not, this game sucks you in! You just want more and more of these mazes, these simple but colorful and changing graphics. And the fact that there's no music or sound effects didn't change anything, because you can always listen to your own playlist while you play, in my case the sounds of Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness by Smashing Pumpkins. So farewell and good night to you all! ■



A KÉT ZSIVÁNY

Developer: **Olivér Orosz**
Release year: **2022**
Platform: **Plus/4**

Get to work! The gold coins are waiting



GP Cars

■ author: Erik Hooijmeijer



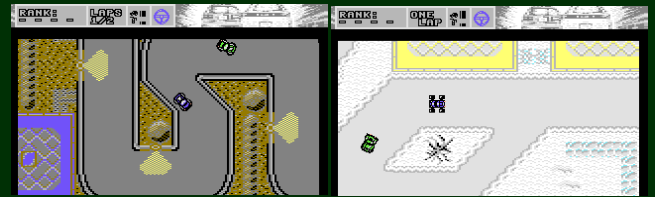
Ah, the smell of nitro and burned rubber. The sound of revving engines. The excitement of racing through narrow, winding streets. Will you be able to overtake the red car, or will it beat you around the next bend?



GP Cars, many years in the making, was released at the FOReVER 2023 party and won 2nd place in the WILD Demo competition. The intro immediately gets you in the racing mood with an excellent engine sound and a fast car approaching. The title screen gives you a taste of what is to come, but at the start of the game only the first two levels are accessible. The first is a qualifying round where you have to beat a tight time limit, and the second is a race against another car. Winning a race opens up another track for you to race on. There is plenty of variety in the tracks as you progress, with different scenery, road types and even forks and shortcuts.

The game is quite difficult. It took me several tries just to beat the time limit on the first lap. After that you have to finish first and the game ends when another car beats you. There are no car-to-car collisions in the game, so you can't thwart a computer driver by cutting him off or pushing him to the side of the road. This means that the only way to win is to be the better driver or find a shorter route on some of the later levels. Practice makes perfect, but I am not sure if there is enough fun in it.

The graphics, music and sound effects in this game are great, which is reason enough to give it a try. You can download it for free from <https://csdb.dk>. ■



GP CARS

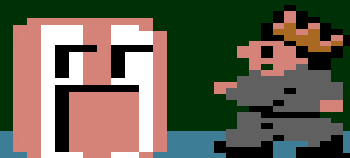
Developer: LHS
Release year: 2023
Platform: C64

I love the smell of Nitro in the morning

🖥️ 8 🎧 8 🚦 6

Pik n Mix

■ author: Retro Chłop / translation: Tomxx



I would like to introduce you to Pik n Mix, a fun and addictive platform game developed by Arlasoft and Shallan. You control a character in order to eliminate all enemies using... your own mouth. Yes, you read that right.



As we play through stage after stage, we destroy our enemies by literally devouring them. After stunning an enemy with a coloured ball and temporarily halting their movement, we have the option of devouring them immediately. If we reach the maximum level of gobbling, our character will become obese. This is necessary in order to complete a round and move on to the next. To do this, we have to lead our fat character to a special platform, which will open a passage to the next level under the influx of fat mass.

The game offers many great extras too. Marking platforms with a single colour will give you some valuable points. Our hero's acquisition of the golden crown will act as a protective umbrella for him. It will allow you to increase your head resistance. You will receive an extra bonus if you complete a level with the crown on your head. Throughout the game we will also come across helpful items such as a clock symbol, an up arrow, a spring, a shield and a yin and yang symbol. Each of these has an associated function.

This title also features a two-player mode. As well as competing against each other on the board, you can also compete for more points and to reach the exit door before your rival. There are also

some nice touches, such as the ability to move around the board in all directions without fear of losing a life.

In my opinion, Pik n Mix is a must-have title for any Commodore 64 fan. The game can be downloaded from <https://arlagames.itch.io/pik-n-mix>. ■



PIK N MIX

Developer: Arlasoft
Release year: 2022
Platform: C64

The big mouth devours everything

🖥️ 6 🎧 7 🚦 8

The epic Epyx *Part III*

■ author: Monka / translation: Tomxx



From 1987 onwards, Epyx took a clear turn towards sports games. They released a series of more and more outlandish and graphically refined productions in this genre. Until the end of their activity, other games under the Epyx banner were rarely released on the C64.

1987 - BET ON SPORTS

The company got off to a strong start in 1987 with the release of the fifth production in the 'Games' series. Having moved on from the traditional athletics and winter competitions to the unconventional World Games competitions described in the previous issue, Epyx went one step further. This time, the player competes in the sports most popular with beachgoers on the west coast of the USA.

CALIFORNIA GAMES

The game greets us with the familiar, albeit refreshed, menu from the previous installments. This time we have fewer, just six competitions, typical of a Venice Beach regular. We take part in local competitions, so we do not choose a nationality as in previous installments of the series, but simply appear with the logo of the chosen manufacturer of the equipment used in the game. We start with a skate-board, which we use to perform tricks in the half-pipe. We then move on to doing as many spinning stunts as possible with a 'slant', before moving on to fighting the wave while surfing.



After a roller-skating session on the boardwalk, there is a BMX obstacle course and then a relaxed Frisbee competition. Each event has its own set of rules and different controls to keep things interesting. They all have very well done graphics and anima-

tions, typical of the series on the C64, as well as touches of background interaction and funny commentary after tricks.

The game was well received and is still playable today. It can still be a showcase for the C64's capabilities.



STREET SPORTS BASEBALL & BASKETBALL

Epyx, having dominated the sports games market and feeling that it was hitting a wall when it came to new ideas, decided to launch a new series of team sports games played in... the backyard. Baseball and Basketball were released as two separate games, but their handling, graphics and approach to gameplay are essentially the same. The game starts with you setting up the court, and then - just like in the good old days - you take turns picking kids to line up on the 'divisions'.



Each player is described in terms of their strengths and weaknesses, as well as their appearance, which will come into play during the game.

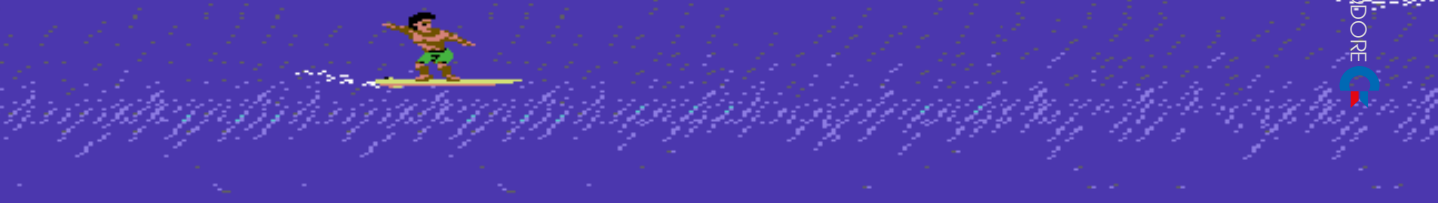
Baseball was released first, so Basketball has additional mechanics, such as losing the ball if it hits the curb or an oil spill, depending on the field you choose.



As far as eight-bit productions go, both games look excellent - outstanding, in fact. They have been equally well received by players.

SUB BATTLE SIMULATOR

To add a bit of variety to the portfolio, a submarine simulator set in the reality of World War II was added to the suite of sports games released in 1987. In the game, we can carry out one of the sixty available missions or join the war and carry out actions until the war ends or the boat is sunk. During the game, we have access to screens that are standard for this type of game, such as sonar, radar and periscope. In this respect, the game does not stand out, but its slowness is noticeable. Not only is the refresh rate slow, but so is the game's reaction to the keys you press. The nail in the coffin is the constant content loading from a floppy disc.



This year, Epyx decided to release two games in the US that had previously been successful in the UK: Spiderbot and Coil Cop, known in the UK as Arac and Thing Bounces Back.



1988 - IMPORTER

1988 saw Epyx reach a peak in the number and quality of games released for the C64. This was due to blockbusters from Europe being released on the US market under different titles. Games like Death Sword,



Axe of Rage or Space Station Oblivion will mean nothing to most European gamers, despite the well-known titles behind them: Barbarian, Barbarian II and Driller.



I will not describe these games in this article, as most of them are still associated with their original publishers. However, it is worth mentioning them to show what good titles Epyx brought overseas. In addition to those already mentioned, there were also other productions: Devon Aire in the Hidden Diamond Caper (Inside Outing), Battleship (Battle Ships), Dive Bomber (Night Raider), Final Assault (Cham-onix Challenge), Mindroll (Quedex), Rad Warrior (The Sacred Armour of Antiriad) and Street Cat (Bad Cat).



In addition to a major import campaign in 1988, Epyx also released a number of their own games.



4X4 OFF-ROAD RACING

Race four-wheel drive off-road vehicles through the wilderness of North America. The game is quite sophisticated. We can do a number of things before and during the race. Before the race, we can go shopping to stock up on the necessary supplies (water, candles or a six-pack) or modify the car of our choice. During the race we will have to stop from time to time to make any necessary repairs. We race along one of four tracks, avoiding obstacles, overtaking opponents and overcoming off-road hazards such as shifting sand.

Unfortunately, the race doesn't live up to the extras and is a far cry from the best racing games on the C64. It's a pity the gameplay isn't that good.



We have access to quite rich possibilities of creating teams or transfers between teams. However, if you just want to go out on the pitch without having to go through the line-ups or settings, you can do that too. The gameplay itself looks quite good, very similar to the aforementioned title from Domark, but it is more difficult to throw or bounce the ball well. I recommend checking this title out, especially for fans of the sport.



The interface of the game is quite unusual. The screen is split into six windows. The action takes place in the top left-hand corner, while the others show the front of the current location, dialogues, the world or local map, the command menu and status. There are a number of original activities available to us, such as planting bugs, following suspects or taking photos, and the amount of time we spend in a location is also important. Although the game doesn't have many locations to visit, I can still recommend it to adventure fans who have missed this title in the past.

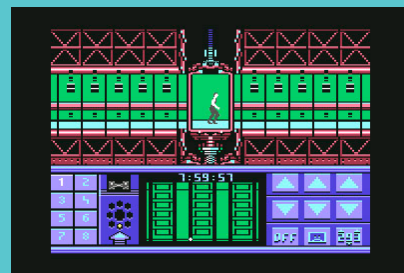


The Legend of Blacksilver was Epyx's return to its RPG roots at a time when gamers associated the company with arcade games with great visuals. In 1988, however, the game bears a striking resemblance to Ultima V, which was released at the same time, although it makes better use of the C64's capabilities and is simpler, since you don't create a whole team but control a single character, and the game can be controlled with a joystick.



The screenshot shows the game's inventory and map interface. On the left, the inventory list includes: ARMOR, BOMB, BOMB SPEED, BOW, BOW SPEED, LEAF, LEAF C, MAGIC, MAGIC C, SHIELD, SHIELD C, SWORD, SWORD C, SWORD SPEED, SWORD C SPEED, and SWORD SPEED C. Below the inventory, the player's status is shown: H.P. 4, FOOD 37, and GOLD 44. On the right, a map view shows a green field with a stone wall, a small building, and a path leading to a cave entrance. The player's character is visible on the path.

A screenshot from the video game 'The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds'. The scene is set in a purple, blocky environment. Link, wearing his signature green tunic and hat, is standing on a green platform. He is surrounded by various enemies, including a Moblin on the left and several Moblins on the right. The environment features numerous platforms, walls, and a large, ornate structure on the right side. The overall aesthetic is reminiscent of the original 'The Legend of Zelda' game.



Two new games have been added to the Backyard Street Sports series: American Football and Soccer. While the overall environment, with squad



selection and playing fields, has not changed, the look of the gameplay itself has, and for the worse. The figures on the field are much smaller than in previous games and lack detail. In American Football, there are many plays and a play editor, which adds some variety to the game, while Soccer is extremely simple and lacks the basic plays we know from our backyard. Combined with a screen movement that does not follow the action, playing backyard football quickly becomes boring. It's not too bad, but if the games had been made in the style of the previous two, it would have been a lot better.



After the sales success of Epyx's first 'Olympics' release, and the release of further variations on more niche disciplines, the story has come full circle. The company decided to release new versions of both the traditional winter and summer competitions. Both games were released in close succession. Interestingly, the Winter Edition was released in the summer and the Summer Edition in the winter.

THE GAMES - WINTER EDITION

In the Winter Edition, we have access to seven sports, some of which are completely new and some of which are revamped versions of sports we have already had the chance to play. The new ones include luge, cross-country skiing, slalom and downhill skiing. The others - ski jump-

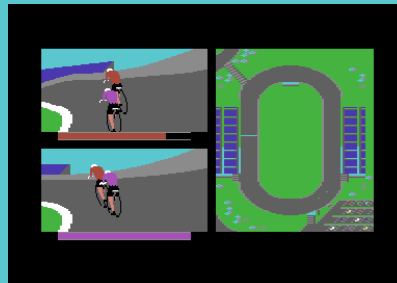
ing, speed skating and figure skating - were already there, but play very differently.

Graphically, everything looks excellent. In terms of enjoyment, however, the disciplines are uneven and the game has not improved on its three-year-old predecessor.



THE GAMES - SUMMER EDITION

In the Summer Edition we have a different menu and eight disciplines, seven of which are completely new. For the first time we will be able to compete in Archery, Hammer Throw, Asymmetric Rail and Wheel Exercises, Hurdles, Trampoline Water Jump and Cycling. The only event that has appeared in Epyx games before is the pole vault, but this time it is presented in a very different way.



The game's intro shows that the authors have opted for a typical televised presentation of the competition. So we have to deal with a graphical splendour rarely seen on the C64: numerous insertions before and after the competition, animations on the screens surrounding the competition arenas, results presented on screens or typical TV-like "camera" projections on the action. The action is usually directed by large, nicely animated characters, although sometimes they do not move as smoothly as in previous editions.

However, the whole thing lacks the playability of Summer Games. The expansive graphics result in long loading times for subsequent competitors, although these are sometimes shorter than the loading time itself. It's not a bad game, just not as good as its predecessors.



1989-1991 - LAST GASPS

For many years, Epyx's revenues came mainly from the C64 games market. By 1989, this hardware was on its way out in the United States. Sales of the latest sports games were weak, and American gamers were turning their attention to Nintendo, which was taking the market by storm. In addition, the company was still working on the portable console (later released as the Atari Lynx) and failed to meet milestones on time, failing to receive installments from Atari. All this brought Epyx to the brink of bankruptcy.

Epyx stopped publishing games for the C64, although they did release a Defender clone in the USA in 1989, the game Revenge of Defender, known as StarRay in Europe.

They released one more eight-bit production in 1990 and one in 1991.

SNOW STRIKE

A flight simulator with an arcade feel. When you enter the game, you don't have to study the thick tomes to take off and be right in the middle of the action.

The game offers four missions, each of which can be played on land or sea, but nothing that stands out from the rest. The jerky animations and poor graphics don't encourage a return to the cockpit years later.





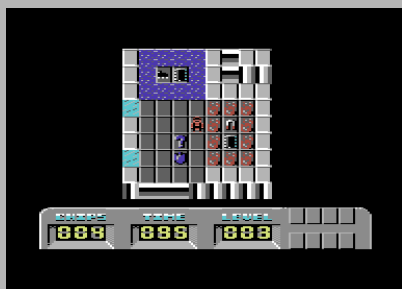
CHIP'S CHALLENGE

The last C64 game released by Epyx was originally released two years earlier on the Atari Lynx.

It is a puzzle and arcade game in which we, as high school student Chip McCallahan, must work our way through a series of puzzles to prove our worth and gain membership of the exclusive Bit Busters computer club.

There are 144 levels to complete, in which we must collect enough chips to get through the slot to the next level. Sounds simple enough, but the complexity of the path to the exit quickly increases. We have to collect keys to open locked passages, find and use various items in the right places, dodge enemies and race against time.

Although the game is played in a small window and the graphics could definitely be better, the gameplay is addictive. Chip's Challenge is a great farewell from Epyx to the C64 users.



As you can see from the games described in the last three issues of K&A+, Epyx has a very rich production portfolio for the C64. Despite a few weaker items, most of the games were very good. Some of the American company's titles were even outstanding, and have left a lasting impression on gamers.

Since floppy disks became a standard on the American market

very soon after the C64's premiere, replacing tape recorders, most of the described productions were released on these media. In Poland, floppy drive owners were in the minority, so many got to know Epyx games from pirated memory dumps or cassettes, which did not allow for full enjoyment. Games that could not be transferred to cassette were missed by many players. Years later, they are worth getting to know. ■

EPYX FAST LOAD

In addition to their huge contribution to the C64 software market, Epyx also proved themselves in the hardware sphere with the Fast Load cartridge released in 1984.

The device allowed the 1541 drive to speed up data transfer by about five times, improved DOS support by adding keyboard shortcuts and commands, and provided access to a machine language monitor and disk editor.

While other products such as The Final Cartridge and Action Replay dominated the market in Europe, Fast Load was very popular overseas, selling over 600 000 units.

TIRED OF WAITING FOREVER FOR YOUR PROGRAMS TO LOAD?

INTRODUCING THE FAST LOAD CARTRIDGE FROM EPYX.

You're tired of waiting forever for your Commodore 64 programs to load. But it's no use glaring at your disk drive. Calling it names won't help, either. It was born slow — a lumbering hippo. You need the FAST LOAD CARTRIDGE from Epyx. FAST LOAD transforms your Commodore 64 disk drive from a lumbering hippo into a leaping gazelle. With FAST LOAD, programs that once took minutes to load are booted up in a matter of seconds.

FAST LOAD can load, save and copy your disks five times faster than normal. It plugs into the cartridge port

of your Commodore 64 and goes to work automatically, loading your disks with ease. And that's only the beginning. You can copy a single file, copy the whole disk, send disk commands, and even list directories without erasing programs stored in memory.

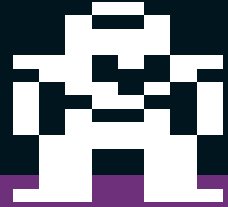
And unlike other products, the FAST LOAD CARTRIDGE works with most programs, even copy protected ones, including the most popular computer games.

The FAST LOAD CARTRIDGE from Epyx. Easy to insert, easy to use and five times faster. So why waste time waiting for your disks to load?

Speed them up with FAST LOAD!

EPYX

Murderlize all Humans!

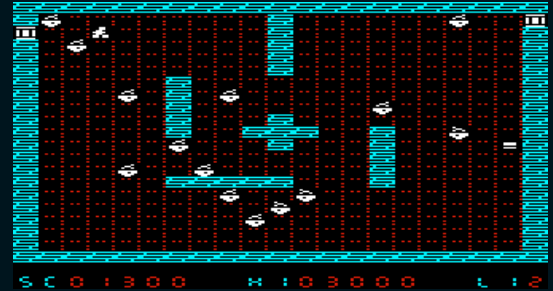


■ author: Erik Hooijmeijer

Oh dear, the Singularity has happened, and now a rogue AI consisting of a military drone and a chick-en-sexing robot has chosen you to experiment on. On the run, chased by ratbots, you get electrocuted with love as you try to unlock the door to the next level.

In one of the most elaborate and unlikely backstories for a game this year, the game mixes classic Berserk with some elements of Portal. You're literally thrown into a maze-like room full of robots that move around randomly and try to shoot you when they see you. At first they are slow to react, but then they get faster and faster. You need to collect the key and, in later levels, move some switches into the correct position before you can open the door and escape to the next level.

The title screen puts you in the right dystopian mood with a mix of the Matrix and Morse code. Graphically, there are some nice touches, such as being pushed into the level and being pulled out by a hook. There are good sound effects and little tunes, but the best are the voiced taunts. All movement in the game is character-based and it takes a while to get to the next square, but exactly when is hard to predict. This lack of control is the biggest flaw in an otherwise great game. You should definitely give it a try, or just read the backstory. Get it at huffelduff.itch.io. ■



MURDERLIZE ALL HUMANS!

Developer: **W E de Villiers**

Release year: **2023**

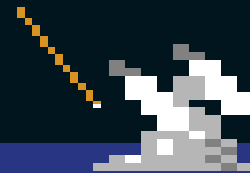
Platform: **VIC-20 +16k**

This is not over, humans!



REVIEW

Missile Defence



■ author: Erik Hooijmeijer

Nuclear escalation has reached the tipping point and now the missiles are flying! As you target and intercept the barrage of incoming missiles, strategic bombers and low orbiting satellites attempt to evade your defences. Can you keep your cities safe? Or will it all end in one big nuclear fireball?

With the nuclear threat back on the agenda, this new version of Missile Command for the C64 comes at just the right time! As in the classic arcade game, you must defend your six cities from incoming missiles by shooting them down with your three anti-missile batteries. Ammunition is limited and it takes a while for a shot to reach its target, so you have to anticipate where the missiles are going. The pace picks up with each level and new enemies are introduced, including the smart missile, which requires a perfectly aimed shot to take out. By the time you reach level 10, you'll be sweating your socks off!

You can play with a joystick or the 1351 mouse. While the joystick works well, the mouse allows you to move around the screen much faster, which can be a lifesaver in later levels. The in-game music perfectly captures the frantic pace and changes when there is only one town left, adding to the drama. The graphics are fast and fluid and don't slow down (sadly...).

This is a fantastic version of Missile Command for the C64. Get out your 1351 and give it a go! Get the game from drmortalwombat.itch.io. ■



MISSILE DEFENCE

Developer: **Dr Mortal Wombat**

Release year: **2023**

Platform: **C64**

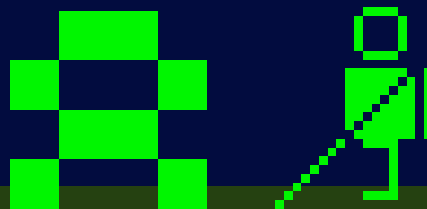
Duck and cover!



REVIEW

PET Panic!

■ author: Komek / translation: Toby

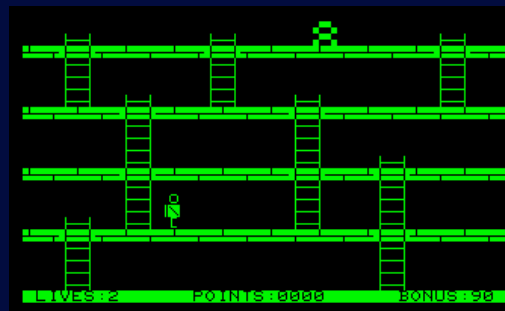


REVIEW

Let's set the scene: You enter a dark, atmospheric 80's arcade. The screen glows as you approach one of the machines, getting closer and closer... You take one last cautious step. Before you know it, you are pulled into another dimension. Here your mission is to fight aliens in the popular slot game Space Panic.

A few months ago, jimbo revived this old game by creating a conversion for the Commodore PET. Let me remind you that in the game we play as an astronaut fighting aliens with the help of... a shovel (!). All you have to do is dig a hole, lure an alien in, hit him on the head with the shovel a couple of times and you're done. Pretty simple, right? During your playthrough, however, it turns out to be a little more difficult than expected. The first level is very easy - a quick warm-up. Then it gets hardcore.

In my opinion, PET Panic is a very successful conversion. One of the reasons is that, despite the technical limitations of the Commodore PET, the spirit of the original game has been perfectly preserved. In addition, the sound effects try to imitate the sounds of the arcade. In short, a good piece of work. I would just like to point out that the scores for graphics and sound are based on the technical possibilities of the PET. Now I'm going to finish this short review and get on with the head-banging. ■



PET PANIC!

Developer: **jimbo**
Release year: **2023**
Platform: **PET**

Legally beating heads with a shovel



Targ

■ author: Erik Hooijmeijer



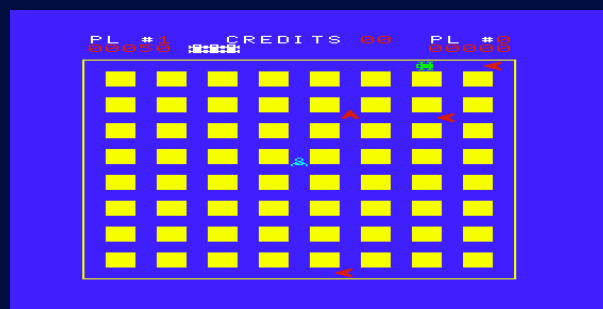
REVIEW

In Crystal City, the heroic Wummel seeks justice against the evil Spectar smugglers, guarded by the Targ ramships. This is what the poster says in Star Wars scroller perspective. The year is 1980 and you can play TARG in your local arcade!

The game was quite popular at the time, so popular in fact that it was sub-licensed to a Japanese company. Mostly it was the other way round! HES also released an unofficial version in 1983 called Torg. It didn't play as smoothly as the original, so 40 years later Pedro Bermejo decided to make a proper port of the game!

The Crystal City, represented on screen by a grid of yellow squares, is buzzing with activity in the form of red Targ trying to crash into the player, who controls a green car. Fortunately, the car can fire missiles and destroy the Targs, which is the goal of the game. From time to time a cyan Spectar Smuggler will appear and when shot it will grant you bonus points, and even more if you shoot it quickly.

The action in this game is quite frantic and it takes some skill to get into a favourable position while avoiding crashing. The graphics are smooth and fast and are displayed with 27x27 characters. The sound effects go beyond those of the original game, but are still well within the 'you've heard it before' range. One feature missing from the original is the speed-up sound when you take too long to clear the screen. Download the game from the Denial forum for some fun action from the days when arcade was king! ■



TARG

Developer: **Pedro Bermejo**
Release year: **2023**
Platform: **VIC-20 +8k**

Back to the Arcade!





Muddy Racers

■ author: Agnieszka FPWG / translation: Toby

Mud is incredible because it can evoke such polarising emotions. This ordinary mud can make us feel disgusted and rebellious, but also joyful, inspired and alive. Muddy Racers brings back some of my fondest childhood memories, when playing with mud was one of the most colourful pastimes amidst the grey apartment blocks, and my mother would often see me covered from head to toe in a muddy mess.

You enter a world of unrestricted car racing - life awaits you on a truly fast track. Muddy Racers is a high-action top-down racing game filled with obstacles and other attractions for both the player and the opponents. Choose from eighteen of the most diverse tracks ever created and take on four unique rivals - Torquey Tom, Nitro Nigel, Revvy Rick and Oily Olive..

Muddy Racers offers decent graphics and sound. Its high replayability and dynamism ensure that this title doesn't get stale too quickly, and the ease of driving translates into the effectiveness of using special abilities. As the tracks progress, the difficulty increases and our rivals get better. There are three modes to conquer: the best time on a selected map, a single race and, most importantly, the championship mode, in which we upgrade our hero's vehicle using four different statistics to climb to the top of the rankings. Fortunately, the creator has included a competitive mode in which we can race on tracks and fight for the crown with four other racing maniacs.

During the race, you have to use all the means at your disposal to win. If that means pushing someone off a cliff or leaving an oil slick that causes our rivals to skid, so be it - they shouldn't be in your way. The brave survive, while the weak end up in the mud. How you approach each track is up to you, but remember: if you choose to play fair, you'll undoubtedly be pushed into the muddy depths. Learn the tracks, choose your vehicle wisely, and drive in the cleverest way possible to win.

The muddy fun of Muddy Racers is incredible. Not only does it offer a fantastic experience, but it is also easy and fun to play. You can have an extra car wash, but... the thrill of another race will get you dirty again! ■

MUDDY RACERS

Developer: **Monte Boyd**
Release year: **2022**
Platform: **C64**

A rough ride with no holds barred



The Three Barbarians

■ author and translation: Maciej "Void" Małecki



EDITORIAL

I find myself forgetting more and more. Maybe it's age, maybe it's "brain fog", it's hard to say. Whenever I ask myself (in my mind): "What was his name?" or "Where was it?" or "Where the hell did I put my EHIC card?", it amazes me that I can still remember seemingly insignificant things. For example, my first computer was a Commodore 64 imported from West Germany. My first game cassette was played title by title by a colleague in the cage next door. There were only five games (my colleague had to go home and we wasted our time writing RUN after the previous LOAD and SAVE). I remember the model of the tape: it was a yellow BASF with a length of 60 minutes.

also remember what I wrote on the J-card:

- ABC-TURBO
- MONTEZUMA'S REV.
- BARBARIAN GAME 1
- GREEN BERET
- COMMANDO
- A.C.E.

Unfortunately, I don't remember the records of the counter. The cassette is lost and I have not seen it with my own eyes for almost thirty years.

I have a great fondness for each of these games. These are the titles I first "stole" (although I did nothing illegal in the Polish reality of the early 1990s). I have to come to terms with the fact that this fragment of my memory will be irretrievably "occupied", without any chance of recovering it for reuse.

Two of these games allowed simultaneous play with my brother, and this feature was used very often in my house. The most fun was the Barbarian game, creatively named 'Game 1' here, as the original release had two parts of this game, differing in scenery and the fact that 'Game 2' did not have a two-player option (which made no sense). I found that out years later as I had not managed to copy the second part at the time. I also found out that Barbarian had a storyline, which was even more pointless as the only point of the game, in my opinion, was to slash and stab with swords.

I make no secret of the fact that we have been playing Barbarian mainly because of this one blow, which is triggered by FIRE and TO THE BACK. This strike is the prototype of the "fatality", a fast track for the impatient and time-poor. This punch, if properly executed, will remove a vital part of the opponent's body, causing him to bleed out rather quickly. The winning strategy, therefore, boils down to a quick decapitation, faster than your opponent can complete it.

Everything about this game is good: the speed, the animations, the abundance of punches and blocks (although why use the latter?). The music is also good. The sound effects specialist has done a great job - this is probably the first game with good music where I turn the music off because I want to hear the sound of chopping and the groan of crossed swords. There's a head strike,

Barbarian is in my 'top 3' epic head-butt games, right up there with IK+ and Bop'n Rumble.

The developers of the game have decided to honour the so-called hired labourers. This is demonstrated by the small but important role of the green undertaker. He carefully drags the corpse of the defeated out of the screen. His name is rumoured to be Lewandowski, but I am not sure.

For several years, when I was using an eight-bit computer, I was the lucky owner of a cassette recorder, which was my only storage device. I stubbornly built up my collection of games on BASF cassettes. Some of the games I copied were badly mutilated hulks made by some greedy businessman abusing a freezer. There were monstrosities like TEST DRIVE 2.1, 2.2 (which was TEST DRIVE 1), 2.3, etc. There were also "games" called Barbarian II-3 and Barbarian II-4, which were live cuts of the final levels of another production by The Palace Software, and a sequel to the first Barbarian.

Freezer junkies were often too lazy to play through a given game and acquire the items necessary for the rest of the game - usually, they used cheat codes, jumped to the selected level and pressed the magic Action Replay button. As a result, these sliced-and-diced creations were often only good for admiring the graphics or listening to the music.

Unfortunately, Barbarian II was not a classic sequel, as the developers of this game decided to completely change the genre. Barbarian II is therefore a classic example of an arcade/adventure game realized as a flip-screen game. Fortunately, the most important feature of the original game has been retained, so we can still enjoy the possibility of decapitating our opponent. The game has also been enriched with a gastronomic element (say hello to Mrs. Magda!) - one of the opponents can bite off a head and swallow it - great! Some of the locations also take their cue from the Commodore 64 classic - a careless leap over a hole ends in a spectacular plunge and scream of despair, alas not quite as poignant as in Mission Impossible.

A great idea for a sequel is the subtle change in control of the hero (heroine). If you played the first Barbarian a lot, I guarantee maximum frustration with the second. If you've ever spun around while trying to crouch, you know what I'm talking about.

Barbarian II would have been a perfect game if it had been limited to 2-3 boards (like the first), dropped the

adventure part and introduced a two-player mode. That is if Palace Software had made a proper sequel. The head-eating could have stayed.

Finally, a small note for less experienced or even attentive players. Searching for Barbarian on the Internet can lead you astray. There is a game called Barbarian, produced by the Australian studio Melbourne House, which, despite its confusingly similar name, is somewhat different from the aforementioned productions. Melbourne House's Barbarian is a very bad game. And the term "very bad" is a euphemism. If I were to make a comparison between Australian Barbarian and a game like, say, Commando Libya, the latter could be called a gem, a well-coded game with beautiful graphics and music, and a playable one at that.

I have a theory about this. Well, the developers of Melbourne House were the ancestors of today's trolls. Their

goal was to make the player's life as painful as possible. The pleasure of playing Barbarian is akin to sliding a certain exposed part of your body down an uneven stair railing that ends in a metal sailor's cleft. I have no doubt that there will be devotees of this kind of experience.

Imagine that the protagonist is controlled by a series of icons that you have to "press" by pointing at them with the "cursor" that you control with the (SIC) joystick. Imagine this cursor moving in a smooth motion. And this game is not chess, but a platformer in which we jump and use a sword to fight enemies. It is a great concept.

Fortunately, Melbourne House released Bop'n Rumble, which washed away some of the shame. I'll be writing about this excellent production, in which we strangle blind old men, kick bourgeois women in suits in the face, and turn dogs on their backs, in the next issue. ■

▼ Barbarian: The Ultimate Warrior, C64, 1987



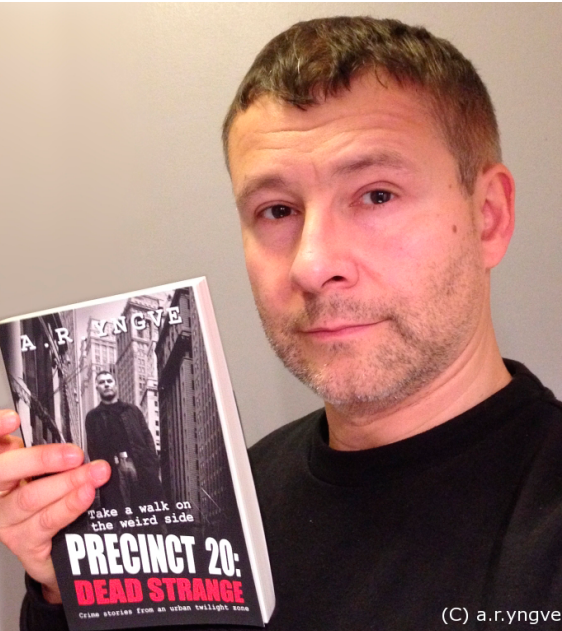
▼ Barbarian II: The Dungeon of Drax, C64, 1988



Alf Yngve

The king of SEUCK

author: Tomxx



(C) a.r.yngve



INTERVIEW

Hi Alf, my interview with you is triggered by the recently released Captain Ishar as a very unique example of a commercially published SEUCK game. But I've known your games since my early C64 days and for many of us you are a well known C64 developer. A developer who has no programming skills at all, but who is bursting with creative ideas and has released over a hundred games to the community. Please tell us about yourself and how did your adventure with the C64 actually start.

I bought my first C64 machine used from a friend. It had a loose key, and I think there was something wrong with it, because several games crashed. But I played lots of games anyway. I can recall that I wrote a half-hearted attempt at a text adventure in BASIC, but I failed to complete even the basic design document. So early on I wanted to make my own games, I just didn't know how.

And when did you come across SEUCK for the first time and how did it change your view on making games?

I first read about the SEUCK utility in the British magazine ZZAP!64 - must have been in 1987/1988. I was in my late teens, in fact it was shortly before the start of my military service! As soon

as I read the review of this utility, I decided that I MUST get it. I began to make plans for the games I was going to create - before I actually bought the SEUCK kit. I know this sounds odd... but it was if I had been waiting for an opportunity like SEUCK to happen.

Was it difficult for a teenager to master this tool? I suppose that, like other developers, you quickly discovered the limitations of the traditional SEUCK.

I instantly fell in love with the freedom to create games without programming knowledge - that was unique at the time. And it was so easy!

The very first game I made with SEUCK was called "Diamond Rings", and it wasn't very good - the files are lost. (I stored everything on cassette tape, and quite often old files were over-written.) The scenario was that you fly a small spaceship through the rings of Saturn, zap ice blocks, and try to collect diamond asteroids.

I sat literally in my room after school, with my C64 and the cassette tape station (never had a disk station), and tinkered with game after game. Even then I realized the severe limitations of the software - it wouldn't let me have more than 8 enemy objects on the screen at the same time. But later I figured out ways to work around those limitations. And that's what I have been doing ever since: Working around the limitations.

Please tell us how a modern game can be created with SEUCK today. The community has developed some improvements, including horizontal scrolling and Martin Piper's brand new SEUCK Redux engine, which fixes flickering, glitching, collision detection and more. Do you use the modern version of SEUCK to break the rules?

I have grown especially fond of SEUCK Redux, and the code "hacks" that make sprites bigger. See for example my game Droid Rumble available from here: <https://richard-tn-d.it.ch.io/droid-rumble>.

What advice would you give to newcomers who want to enter the SEUCK realm in 2023?

Let your imagination run wild. Try to be as original as possible. And use all the "hacks" that are freely available. A good place to start is Richard Bayliss's "SEUCK School" available at: http://www.tnd64.unikat.sk/SEUCK_School.html.

Looking at your gaming history on CSDB, I see that you, like many of us, returned to the scene around 2010. What brought you back?

I eventually sold my C64 equipment in the 1990s, and later I discovered emulator software. Since I am a PC user, it was quicker and more practical to use SEUCK on a C64 emulator. When the C64 "scene" reappeared on the Internet, I jumped in... but the real kicker was when coder Jon Wells improved SEUCK with a side-scrolling version in the 2000s. That's the moment when my old enthusiasm returned. I could finally realize the side-scrolling game ideas that the original software wouldn't allow. One early result of this was my game 1,000 Kung-Fu Maniacs! (released by Psytronik Software).

With so many games released, you must be a creative person. Where does your creativity come from? What do you do for a living?



I have had a number of jobs, not all of them creative. My ideas come from... a mail-order service in Australia, where I buy all the ideas. Only kidding! It's just the way I am. I have worked many years as a game designer and game tester for a Scandinavian software developer, and this of course helped me improve. I also write fiction, and I have made many illustrations - comics, book covers, childrens' books.

For example, my game PRECINCT 20: DEAD STRANGE was based on my own book with the same title (<https://www.amazon.com/PRECINCT-20-Strange-R-Yngve/dp/1980729867>).

Do you still count your games? And which ones are you really proud of?

I think I recently reached my 100th game, but I've lost count of them.

My "best" game always seems to be the one I'm currently making... or so it feels.

But I'm especially proud of my humorous game titles, such as the KUNG-FU MANIACS Trilogy, or SNATCH McBLAGGER (included in the ZAP FIGHT TRILOGY compilation).

Subjectively, what is the main factor that drives you to create? I'm a game developer myself, and there's something very special about the moments when I'm coding for a retro platform and leaving the whole world behind.

When you've been doing this for such a long time, it comes easily. Remember, I began around 1987 or 1988. So I've been using this utility on and off for over 30 years. Crazy, eh?

Have you had any of those negative moments where you wanted to stop developing new games or would you agree that there is a true passion in our hearts?

Well... I'm concerned about the recent surge in AI software. It made me think, "What if an AI could make a game for me? But would that be as much fun?" Also, I've been thinking many times that perhaps I should leave retro games behind and commit more time to making PC games, where there's a bigger audience. This may still happen in the future. We'll see.

What do you think of the C64 community today? Have you managed to build some strong personal relationships over the years?

"Kenz" McKenzie who runs the retro label Psytronik, was the one who started publishing my C64 games after most of the C64 software business folded in the 90s. He's been my most important support through the years.

Kenz introduced me to two very talented C64 coders: Richard Bayliss (who is also an excellent C64 music composer) and Martin Piper. Richard sent me POKE codes that even a non-coder like me could add to my SEUCK files (on the C64 emulator), and thus create entirely new effects. The cooperation with Richard Bayliss and Martin Piper is something I value highly. It's so great that we can bond around making games, even though we live in different countries.

Your productions are often done in collaboration with The New Dimension. How do you like working with Richard and how do you complement each other?

Richard is a musical genius. His soundtracks are generally very good and often brilliant. His music can greatly enhance the mood and theme of any game. Me, I'm good with graphics and design and words. Richard has coded the ideas that I had but lacked the coding skills to create.

When you are not making games, you are often supplying graphics to other developers. Please tell us about your C64 development environment and the tools you use to create assets.

I wouldn't say I do that "often." In fact, it strikes me how few collaborations I've made with others in the scene.

When I work on a C64 game, I use an emulator on a PC - mostly WinVICE. I use several different modified versions of the SEUCK utility. And I have a longstanding cooperation with coders Martin Piper and Richard Bayliss of TND, who help me make the various enhancements - power-ups, music, special effects, etc. I also write extensive, detailed design documents that describe what I wish to enhance.

I make almost all graphics with SEUCK, and some with the graphics program GIMP (similar to Adobe Photoshop).

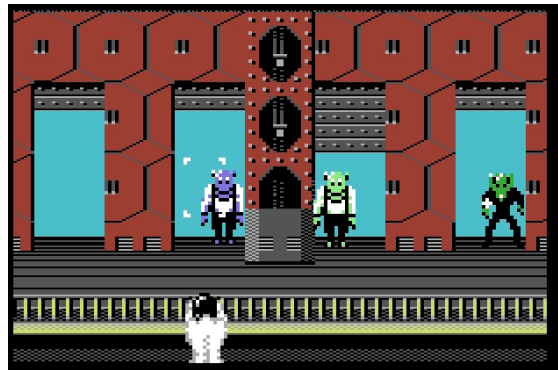
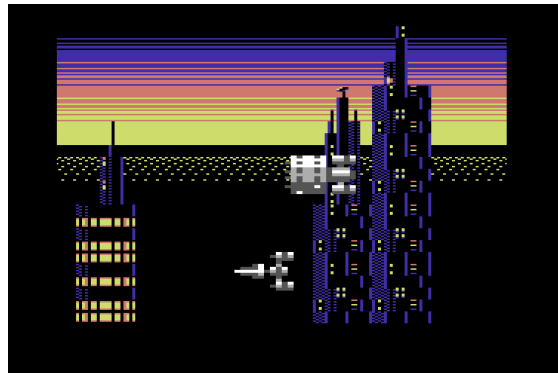
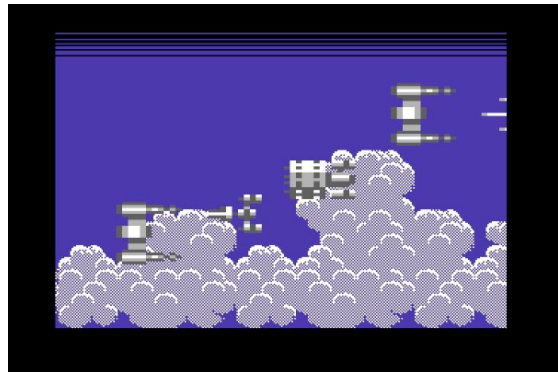
How important to you and the community are the annual C64 SEUCK Game Contests?

The game contests have been a motivating factor. Of course I like to win! So I've tried extra hard to make the best, most original games.

What are your plans for the future? Can we expect more commercial games from you and your crew?

As usual, I have more ideas than I have time to realize. But I'm working on a sequel to Captain Ishtar... with the working title "Captain Ishtar Vs. The Federation's Most Wanted."

Thanks and good luck! ■



▲ Courtesy of Alf, we can present screenshots of the game Captain Ishtar 2, which is currently in development

XC=BASIC coding guide

Part IV – how to progress fast

■ author: Tomasz „Razor” Kaniecki / translation: Azu



TUTORIAL

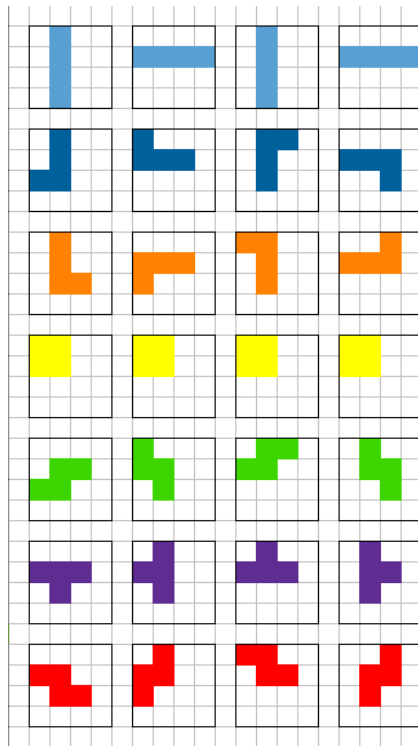
In the previous episode, we started to design a Tetris clone. Now it's time to decide on a strategy for the most important elements of the game: the blocks and the board. We also need to figure out the game engine.

The work of a game programmer is not just writing code. It is necessary to prepare in advance the work plan and, most importantly, the engine on which the game will be based. And that, among other things, is what we will be looking at in this episode.

DESIGNING FORMS

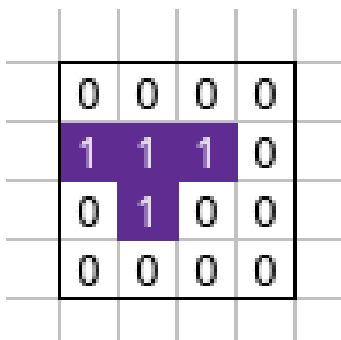
We already know that we have a base of 7 shapes, so if we turn them all around, we have 28 possible shapes that need to be in the game.

Now we need to decide how to store each shape. We already know that we have 28 shapes, so we will store 4 rotations for each shape. We can assume that our figures will fit into 4x4 matrices, each containing 16 square blocks. It seems obvious that a square should be mapped to a bit in memory: it can contain a value of 0 or 1, which means that the square is empty or set.



Since there are 16 squares in each shape, a shape can be stored in the 16-bit range, which is exactly the length of an integer in XCB. So we'll take advantage of the language's capabilities and use bitwise operations to check, for example,

whether blocks overlap or whether they match a free space on the board.



So how do we encode a single shape in 16 bits? By reading the squares from top left to bottom right and writing the bits one at a time.

The example T-shape from the image above is encoded as 0000 1110 0100 0000 in binary form, which is decimal 16398. But since XCB accepts numbers in binary form, we will use that format.

We will encode all the shapes in one DATA statement.

```
REM -- Shapes of all pieces in all rotations
DATA shapes[] =
%0100010001000100, %0000111100000000,~
%0010001000100010, %0000000011110000,~
%0100010011000000, %1000111000000000,~
%0110010001000000, %0000111000100000,~
%0100010001100000, %0000111010000000,~
%1100010001000000, %0010111000000000,~
%1100110000000000, %1100110000000000,~
%1100110000000000, %1100110000000000,~
%0000011011000000, %1000110001000000,~
%0110110000000000, %0100011000100000,~
%0000111001000000, %0100110001000000,~
%0100111000000000, %0100011001000000,~
%0000110001100000, %0100110010000000,~
%1100011000000000, %0010011001000000
```

There are a few important things to note:

- The DATA instruction in XCB is different from the instruction in CBM BASIC. In XCB it means "create an array at compile time and preload its values"
- The square brackets () after the variable name means that it is an array without an explicit array length. The size is automatically calculated by the compiler based on the number of elements
- If no "sigil" symbol is appended to the variable name, it means that the variable is of integer type, representing a 16-bit value in the range -32768 to 32767
- The % sign before a numeric literal means that a binary number follows
- You may also have noticed the tilde sign (~). Since a new line marks the end of a statement in XCB (as in most BASIC dialects), we need a special character to allow the statement to continue on the next line. It is important to remember that there can be no other characters after the tilde, not even a space
- The DATA statement can be placed anywhere in the program.

Let's also define an array containing the colour code for each shape:

```
REM -- Piece color codes
DATA colors![] = 14, 6, 8, 7, 5, 4, 2
```

This time a "!" is appended to the variable name, indicating a byte type and a value between 0 and 255.

GAME FIELD DESIGN

The board is the place where the game takes place. In the world of TETRIS it is often called a Tettrion. It is a 10×20 block surrounded by a frame. The board also has an invisible part where the pieces start to fall.

Since we have encoded the shapes in 16-bit integers, it would be useful if we could encode the board in a similar way.

Each row will have a corresponding 16-bit value, while each column will have one bit within that value. If we allocate 25 integers, or 25 rows, we will have space to store both visible and invisible areas.

Note that the so-called ceiling (grey in the picture above) is only drawn, but is not part of the board.

Let's define the board using the DIM command:

```
REM -- The playfield, an array of 25 integers
DIM playfield[25]
```

We will need to initialise the playfield every time we start a new game, so why not write a piece of code with a procedure to do this:

```
REM -- Initialize the playfield
REM -- Called when starting a new game
PROC clear_playfield
  REM -- initialize the playfield
  FOR i! = 0 TO 23
    \playfield[i!] = %0010000000000100
  NEXT
  \playfield[24] = %0011111111111100
  REM -- empty the playfield on screen
  FOR i! = 4 TO 23
    TEXTAT 15, i!, "      " : REM 10 spaces
  NEXT
ENDPROC
```

The block of code between the PROC and ENDPROC keywords is called a procedure. It has its own variable playfield. Note that the variable playfield is preceded by a \, character, which tells the compiler that "this is not a new local variable, but the same one defined outside this procedure".

The i! here is a local variable and will not conflict with another i! defined outside this procedure. i! In short - the magic of arrays. It is also worth noting that array indices in XCB are based on zeros. If the length of the array is 25, as in the case above, the correct array indexes start at 0 and end at 24.

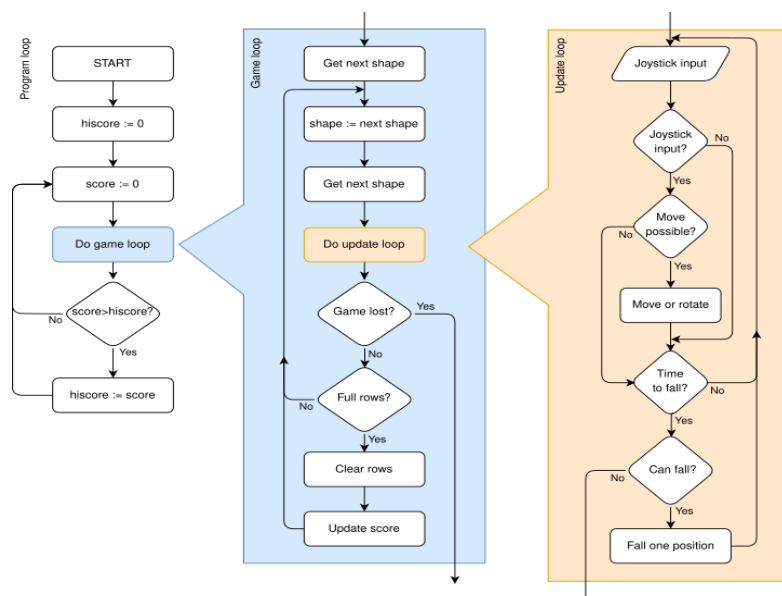
The above procedure does two things: it initialises the playfield array, setting initial values for each of its elements in FOR ... NEXT.

The next loop deletes the playfield in screen RAM. We will call this procedure later in our program using the CALL command.

GAME ENGINE

The last thing we will do in this episode is to define the sequence of actions in our game. We will use the old but still best method of drawing the flow of our program using a diagram:

The diagram on the left is a plan that roughly describes the flow of our program, which we call a program loop. It is an endless loop in which the player plays as many games as he wants, updating the best score after each game if necessary.



The loop contains a node in blue, which is used in the blue area in the middle. We call this a game loop because it describes a single game. A piece is generated, then it falls from the top of the screen, and when it hits the bottom we check if there are already full rows to clear, which gives a bonus to the score. The loop continues until the board is full, which is the end of the game.

This area also contains a node (in yellow), the update loop, which is located in the large yellow area on the right. This is the inner loop, responsible for the journey of a single block. After it is created, it ends when the block reaches the end of the free field. It describes how the object moves according to the user's input.

Now that we have a plan and the basic elements of the game are set up, the next part of the tutorial will deal with:

- Defining all the global variables we need;
- Writing procedures and functions that will be used frequently;
- Creating three loops from our diagram.

See you next time! ■

GameDev Tools: SpritePad

■ author and translation: Void

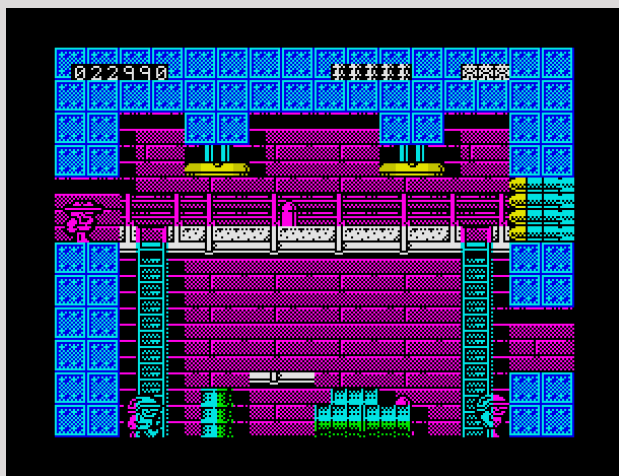


In a previous article, I described CharPad, a tool for creating background graphics for the Commodore 64. Since most games require the use of sprites, let's take a look at SpritePad Pro, another great tool from Subchrist Software.

COMMODORE 64 SPRITES

Home computers of the early 80s were notoriously short on RAM and CPU power. To provide attractive graphics for video games, hardware designers had to make certain compromises.

One of the concessions made in the case of a machine called the Commodore 64 was the use of graphics attributes, which were implemented using a separate colour memory. Attributes were defined for larger sections of the screen (8x8 pixel squares, to be precise), and within these sections, common properties such as background colour and line colour were defined. Thanks to this solution, the amount of RAM required to store the entire displayed image has been reduced to 2000 bytes for text modes and up to 10,000 bytes for high-resolution modes. The price we pay for this saving is a phenomenon called attribute clash.



An example of attribute clash in ZX Spectrum game (source: <https://rickdangerous.co.uk/zxspect.htm>)

Fortunately for the Commodore 64, attribute clashes are rarely visible due to two additional features of the VIC-2 chip: hardware scrolling and sprites.

Today we will focus on the latter. Sprites are independent, rectangular graphic areas with dimensions of 24x21 pixels that can be positioned anywhere on the screen. Thanks to their independence, individual colour schemes and transparency support, moving objects act like stickers that do not affect the background colour in any way.

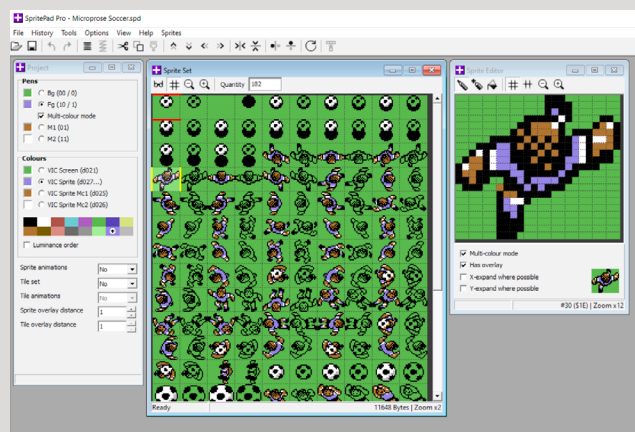
Sprites are therefore separate "units" that need to be individually designed and stored in memory. Unfortunately, we need a new tool for editing sprites, as CharPad is not sufficient in this case. This is where SpritePad comes in, all in white.

SPRITEPAD: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Let's start with the good news: SpritePad shares the same philosophy of use as CharPad - if you know how to use the latter, you'll pick up the sprite editor in no time at all. When you start it, you'll see a familiar view: an interface with several windows containing a set of sprites, an editor for them, and a project that provides access to the colour palette and settings.

SpritePad supports both modes of Commodore 64 sprites and allows you to combine them in a single project (just as the C64 allows you to mix different modes of sprites on a single screen). We can use high-resolution sprites as well as multicolour sprites with reduced resolution. We can choose any of the 16 colours as main sprite colours independently for each sprite in a set, and we can also declare two additional colours globally that will be shared by other sprites.

The very good news is that SpritePad supports overlay, i.e. placing two sprites on top of each other to get more colours or, even better, combining multicolour sprites (in the background) with high-resolution sprites (in the foreground). This way we can get detail and colourful effect at the same time.



SpritePad and sprite overlay used in MicroProse Soccer

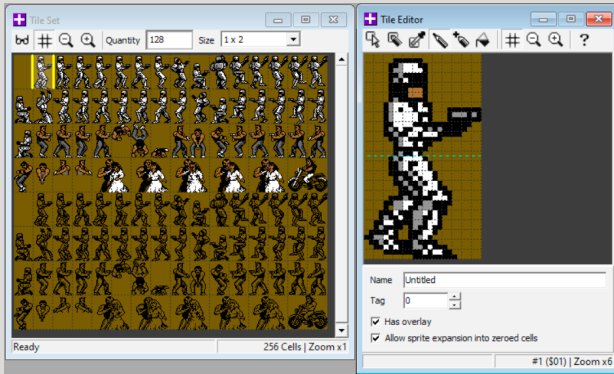
BASIC EDITING TOOLS

The SpritePad offers the same editing capabilities as the CharPad. We can draw sprites using any colour from the palette, either with a pen, brush or flood fill.

Other useful tools include scrollers, which support moving content in all four directions. The contents of the sprite can also be mirrored horizontally and vertically. There is also a tool that transforms the sprite so that its shape is symmetrical about the horizontal or vertical axis.

BIGGER SPRITES? NO PROBLEM!

SpritePad allows you to organise sprites into groups that form tiles. Different sizes of tiles are supported, up to 8x8. Tiles can be combined with an overlay for truly stunning results. SpritePad can even combine a single multi-coloured, expanded sprite with two high-resolution overlays.

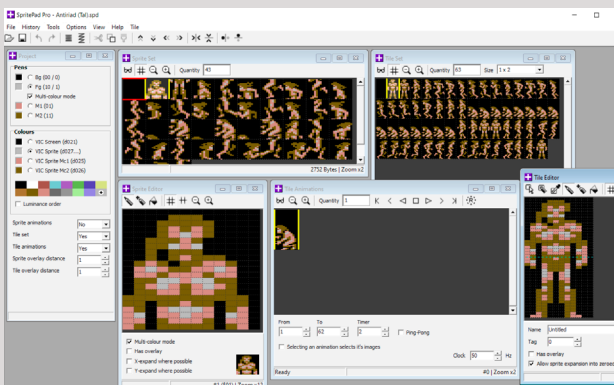


Tile sets used in Robocop

Each tile consists of expanded and collapsed sprites, in various combinations. Of course, to display a tile consisting of more than 8 elements, we need to implement some form of sprite multiplexing - you have to do this yourself, SpritePad will not help you with this task.

ANIMATION

The Commodore 64 can store up to 64 sprite shapes in memory visible to the video system. Changing the shape address for each of the 8 hardware sprites is very simple and allows animations to be created. The SpritePad supports the creation of sequences of multiple sprites, which can then be played back at a selected speed and with different looping modes (regular loop and ping-pong).



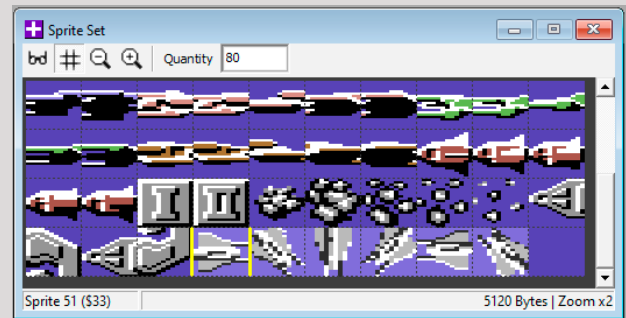
Animations can be combined with tiles and, of course, overlays. The animation sequences can then be exported to binary form, embedded in assembly code and used in your game (but yes, as usual, you have to code this yourself).

ROTATION

Z-Rotator is a tool that allows you to create a set of sprite shapes that are created by rotating the original sprite. This is very useful for creating animations.

After creating a base frame for our rotating shape, we specify the number of angles for which we want to generate additional shapes. We can test the prepared data using a slider, and then decide what SpritePad should do

with the generated content. We can place them in the copy buffer and then paste them anywhere in the sprite set. The generated rotation frames can then be combined into an animation sequence.

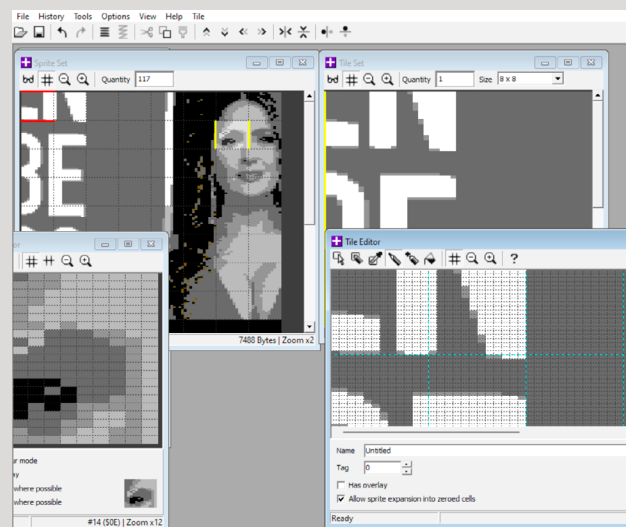


The resulting rotating frames can then be combined to create an animation.

IMPORT AND EXPORT

Traditionally for Subchrist Software products, SpritePad offers a wide variety of import and export tools. Export modes include the binary format of sprites, attributes and tiles. This data can also be exported as text data, including assembler source format. Import modes support emulator snapshot rippers, so we can finally steal sprites from our favourite games. SpritePad also supports import from and export to SEUCK project files.

Sprites and tile sets can be imported directly from PNG, BMP and GIT images.



SUMMARY

SpritePad looks like just another sprite editor. But it is not. It is a very powerful tool that supports many non-standard techniques used on Commodore 64 today, such as creating large bosses or using overlays to create a nice effect of detail. The support for animation is simply outstanding.

You can buy SpritePad Pro from the creator's website: <https://subchristsoftware.itch.io/>. The good news is that you can buy a bundle with CharPad Pro and get a discount.

SpritePad is a Windows program, but according to Subchrist it runs on Linux with Wine. ■

How to create your own game for the C64? *Part III*

■ author and translation: Void



In the previous parts of this series, we learned how to draw a static background and how to use the Commodore 64's text modes to display the game's interface. In this part we will learn how to animate the game's objects and how to detect collisions between them. The source code for Rescuer can be found at <https://github.com/ka-plus/rescuer>.

ANIMATION

Animation is simply a change on the screen that is repeated over time. To create an effect of movement, we need to change the position of the object on the screen. The position of these objects should be updated at regular intervals.

The Commodore 64 provides two mechanisms to handle this regularity that we can use: a programmable timer interrupt and a raster interrupt that is executed exactly 50 times per second (or 60 times per second for NTSC machines). Using a simple loop is not enough, because the CPU will be busy with other tasks of unpredictable duration, and the animation will not be smooth enough.

We will use the second mechanism (raster interrupt) because synchronizing with the displayed image will allow us to manage the animation of moving objects on the screen - we will be sure that, for example, the movement of the rescue vehicle will not occur at the moment when the graphics system is busy displaying it, which may be visible to the player (a brief but disturbing effect of screen tearing may occur).

The following code should be executed at every frame of the game:

```
doOnEachFrame: {
    jsr handleControls
    jsr updatePlayerPosition
    jsr animatePlayer
    jsr checkCollision
    dec $D019 // clear interrupt flag
    jmp $EA31 // perform standard Kernal
              // IRQ routine
}
```

There are other activities that we would like to do on a regular basis, not just the animation itself. Examples are handling joystick input or checking the collision state.

Note that we must clear the interrupt flag at the end of the interrupt routine, otherwise the game will not work properly.

Some "magic" is required to register our interrupt routine.

```
sei // disable CIA#1 interrupts
lda #$7F
sta $DC0D
lda $DC0D
// set new IRQ handler
lda #<doOnEachFrame
```

```
sta $0314
lda #>doOnEachFrame
sta $0315
cli
```

We need to disable the CIA#1 interrupts (because they are running by default). Then we store a pointer to our procedure at \$0314/\$0315. The use of "sei" and "cli" is also important (they disable and enable interrupt triggering respectively), imagine what could happen if the interrupt is triggered while writing the pointer to the interrupt handler.

Great, we know how to update the position of the rescue ship, but what does that mean? How do we draw the ship over the static background? Here we will use...

MOVEABLE OBJECTS

One of the key factors in the marketing success of the Commodore 64 was the use of moving objects called "sprites". Sprites are bitmaps with a size of 24x21 pixels, which can be placed independently on the screen with a precision of a single pixel. Sprites make it possible to use text modes to implement the background, which is very economical in terms of memory and CPU usage.

We will use sprites to create castaways. Castaways do not move, nor are they animated, but using sprites to render them has an advantage - castaways can be easily shown and hidden without affecting the background memory map, and you can use sprite-sprite collision detection to detect the fact that the castaway is being taken on board.

The maximum number of sprites that VIC-2 can handle at one time is 8, which does not mean that you cannot display more of them on the screen (we will talk about this in the next parts of the cycle).

VIC-2 provides individual registers that allow you to program each of the eight sprites. The last eight bytes of screen memory contain pointers to memory banks containing the shape definitions for each of the moving objects. The 16KiB of addressable VIC-2 memory can hold exactly 256 banks of 64 bytes each (roughly the size of a single shape definition) - and this is exactly the number of banks that can be stored in a single-byte pointer.

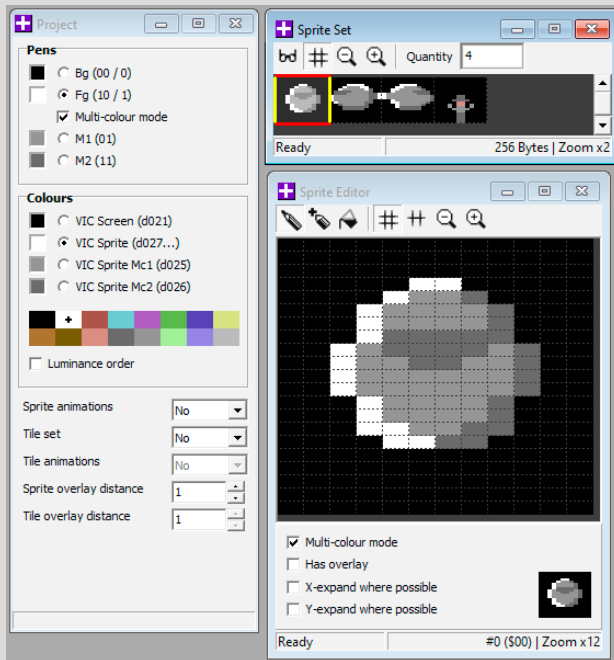


Figure 1 When we use animation, each frame must be designed as a separate shape, e.g., using the SpritePad program

COLLISION DETECTION

VIC-2 can automatically detect collisions between moving objects and the background. The collision detection mechanism works relentlessly, with pixel precision.

Sprite and background collision detection is cleverly solved - the VIC checks if there is an overlap between the non-transparent pixels of the moving object and the foreground pixels of the background. Yes, the background pixels are split into foreground and background.

In the case of hires modes (both text and bitmap), the situation is quite simple: foreground pixels are encoded with 1, while background pixels are encoded with 0.

In the case of multicolour modes, the colour is encoded using a pair of bits. Colours coded with combinations of 00 and 01 are considered background (collision free) and those coded with 10 and 11 are considered foreground (only they cause a collision with sprites). Thanks to this, we

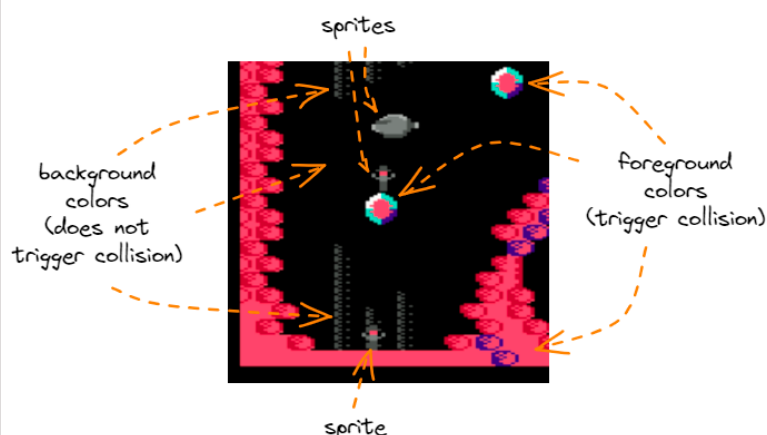


Figure 2 Usage of colors and collision detection in multicolour modes

can use two colours to draw the background that will not interfere with the movement of our ship.

The collision detection mechanism is based on two VIC registers. The first is located at \$D01F and is used to detect collisions between moving objects and the background (specifically non-transparent pixels of the sprite and foreground pixels of the background). The Commodore 64 has eight independent sprites, and for each one a corresponding bit is set in \$D01F.

See how the "checkCollision" subroutine detects a collision between the rescue ship and the background:

```
lda $D01F
and #%00000001
beq !+
    lda gameState
    ora #%00000001
    sta gameState
! :
```

As the collision condition is one of the factors that control our game, we need to know when it occurs in the main loop, so we use the "gameState" variable to communicate. The "checkCollision" alone is only used within the interrupt detection procedure.

The second register is located at \$D01E and is used to detect collisions between moving objects. But which ones?

Unfortunately, we are not able to determine this unambiguously. All sprites for which the bit in \$D01E is set are currently in a collision, but we do not know in which configuration. Fortunately, in our game, the other sprites - the castaways - do not collide with each other. The only object they can come into contact with is our ship. So we know for sure that the sprite whose bit is set has been touched by the lifeboat, so we can turn off its bit in register \$D015 and remove it from the screen.

```
lda $D01E
and #%00011110
beq !+
    eor $D015
    and #%00011111
    ora #%00000001
    sta $D015
! :
```

Note, however, that we do not need an additional variable to store information about visible castaways. All we need is to use \$D015 for this purpose. Similarly, we can use \$D015 to check the end-of-level condition - all bits except zero (rescue ship) must be off.

```
lda $D015
and #%00011110
beq nextLevel
jmp mainLoop
```

CONTROLS AND GAME PHYSICS

In our super-simple game, we will use a joystick connected to port 2 to control the rescue ship. Joysticks are the easiest input devices to use in the Commodore 64. All we have to do is use a special chip called the CIA-1.

First we need to set the IO pins connected to the joystick port to "input":

```
lda $DC02
and #%11100000
sta $DC02
```

We only need to do this once, so we can include this code in the "init" subroutine.

To check and store the current state of the joystick, we will use the "joyState" memory cell, which is updated by the following subroutine:

```
readJoy: {
    lda $DC00
    and #%00011111
    sta joyState
    rts
}
```

We can then simply play the game by pressing the FIRE button. Another very simple piece of code is responsible for this:

```
titleScreenLoop:
    jsr readJoy
    lda joyState
    and #%00010000
    bne !+
    jsr startGame
    jmp outerMainLoop
!:
    jmp titleScreenLoop
```

More interesting is the code that handles the game's controls. The game uses UP, LEFT and RIGHT joystick directions. If the joystick is held in one direction for a long time, it activates an engine that accelerates the ship. Switching from LEFT to RIGHT or vice versa will also cause the ship to turn.

In our case, the control handling code is integrated with the game physics. The more you use the engine, the more speed the ship gains. It's nothing more than good old Newton's laws of motion: the force coming from the engine is proportional to the acceleration, the acceleration is proportional to the velocity, and the velocity is proportional to the distance travelled.

As you may know, the MOS 6502 processor is not very good at multiplication, so we will use a trick to get around it. Multiplication is just a series of additions, so we can use a loop to add the same value several times.

Look at the following code, it just sets the acceleration to 0 (stop the engine) or a constant value (fire the engine). Note that moving the joystick to the left while the ship is moving to the right will cause the ship to stop accelerating and turn to the neutral position.

```
joyLeft:
    lda playerState
    and #PLAYER_RIGHT
    beq !+
    // rotate to neutral
    lda playerState
```

```
and #(PLAYER_RIGHT ^ $FF)
sta playerState
setWord(hAcceleration, 0)
    // stop accelerating
    jmp checkUp
!:
    lda playerState
    ora #PLAYER_LEFT
    sta playerState
    setWord(hAcceleration, -VERTICAL_ACCELERATION)
    // joy left, accelerate
```

Then we just periodically propagate the acceleration to velocity and then to position using only 16-bit addition:

```
updatePlayerPosition: {
    adcWord(hAcceleration, hVelocity, hVelocity)
    adcWord(hVelocity, hPosition, hPosition)
    adcWord(vAcceleration, vVelocity, vVelocity)
    adcWord(vVelocity, vPosition, vPosition)
    rts
}
```

Note that velocity is increased by the amount of acceleration, and position is increased by the amount of velocity. Because acceleration is a derivative of velocity over time, we need to add acceleration to the current velocity at each frame of the game. The same applies to speed and position. This way we have eliminated the need for multiplication in a very clever but natural way.

You might ask: why are we using 16-bit arithmetic? The answer is simple: sometimes one pixel per frame is too fast. We want smooth motion, especially when acceleration starts, so we need to use more precision.

We always use the most significant byte of the position to determine the sprite's position on the screen:

```
lda hPosition + 1
sta $D000
lda vPosition + 1
sta $D001
```

SUMMARY

At this stage, our game is complete in the sense that it is playable. However, it is still far from being a quality title. There are a lot of things we can improve.

Our game lacks opening and closing sequences. Crashing the ship immediately restarts the level or ends the game. A proper death sequence and a game over screen would be a nice addition. We can also add some sound effects, like the sound of the engine or the sound of the explosion. We can also add some music. I prefer to use Goat Tracker for this. Goat Tracker is a music tracker software dedicated to the creation of games: besides composing music, it also provides a playing routine that can be used in our programs and is also capable of playing simple sound effects. This video game (Rescuer) is also a good candidate for a built-in level editor. I will leave all this as an exercise for you.

In the next parts I will tackle the complex problem of games with smoothly scrolling backgrounds. ■

Lester

■ author: Komek / translation: Ari

I love chamber adventures! There was a time when quite a lot of them were produced for the C64 and Atari XL/XE. Seemingly uncomplicated, but some of them were able to draw the player in for a nice few hours or even nights. I experienced it myself... ah, the times of wild youth! Times that have just returned, thanks to the game Lester! Let me tell you a bit about this addictive and still quite fresh production, which is a nod to metroidvania.



So let's move to the year 2182, to the planet Mars, where the main computer of the UNSS ASAMI space station rebelled and took control of the guard droids, and then decided to direct the base full of unprotected radioactive material towards Earth. Oh boy, this is no joke! You have to do something immediately! In the game we play the role of a new generation android, L-3573-R, who must stop the impending doom and liberate the space station.

The beginning of the game is relatively easy, but exploring the huge base consisting of more than 60 rooms is quite a challenge, so it will be a bit more difficult in the later stages. Rebellious droids controlled by hostile artificial intelligence are scattered everywhere. Not enough? Ha, ha, ha... There are still hot vapors, laser beams, spikes, vats of radioactive liquid... Well, it's not easy. Be sure to destroy every barrel you encounter, because they contain, among other things, passes (cards), without which you will not open the door to the next rooms. A very important role in the game is played by special terminals, thanks to which you can display a map of the station, save a checkpoint, and spend the coins collected on replenishing energy or better weapons. There are many other useful bonuses in the game, which allow you to quickly deal with a bunch of hostile android guards, such as electromagnetic pulses, bombs or shields.

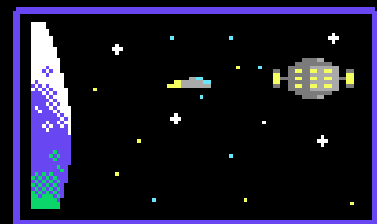
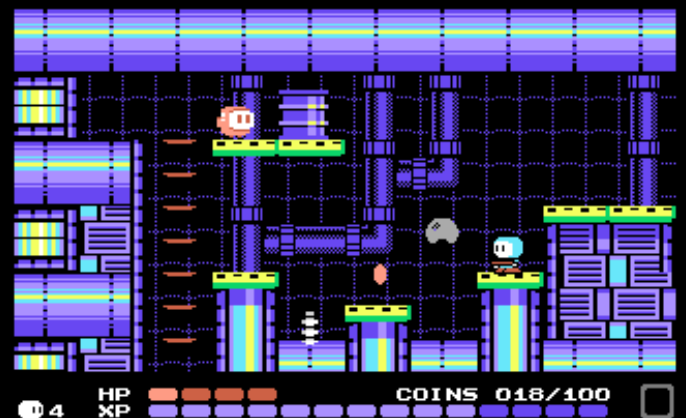
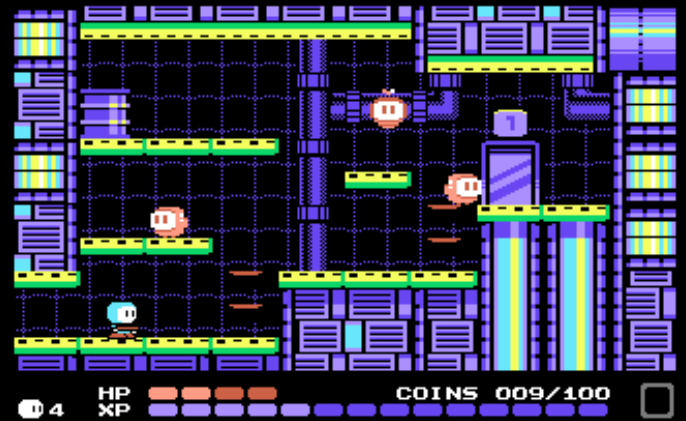
I have to tell you that Lester made a great impression on me, and a number of factors contributed to this. First of all, the colorful graphics, which were designed in a very good style à la NES, and the brilliantly drawn sprites. I also love the flash effect in the background that can be seen in the various rooms. The soundtrack is also amazing. Good musical compositions combined with interesting sound effects create an immersive atmosphere. Anyway, the most important thing is playability, and this stands at a high level. If you start playing in the evening, I guarantee you will finish late at night.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Lester is the first game created by Knifegrinder. Big congratulations to the author, let's hope he will create more such good productions. ■

You can find the game file and more information about the game at the following link: knifegrinder.itch.io/lester



YOU ARE THE ANDROID L-3573-R THE FIRST OF A NEW GENERATION OF GUARDIAN DROIDS INDEPENDENT FROM A CENTRAL AI■



LESTER

Developer: Knifegrinder
Release year: 2023
Platform: C64

Android, save us from extinction!



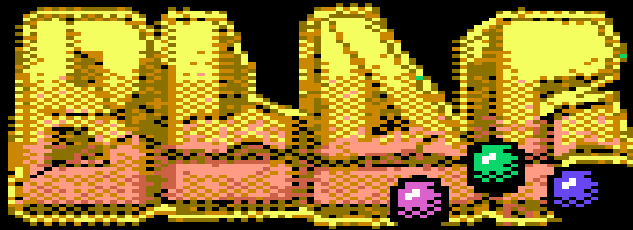
Balls like a Frog

author: Agnieszka FPWG / translation: Tobi



REVIEW

The remake and remaster trend is in full swing this year, with the excellent comebacks of *Resident Evil 4* and *Dead Space*. The creators of the latter even gave us the voice of the main character, which was sadly missing from the first instalment of the series. The developers are resurrecting their former hits and bringing them back to us in a package that has been adapted to today's standards. But what do you think of the demakes? As you may have guessed from the name, a demake is the opposite of a remake and means that a given production is reworked to run on our beloved C64.



DR. C64 PORT BY WOMBAT
MUSIC BY CRISPS



BALLS LIKE A FROG

Developer: **Dr. Mortal Wombat**
Release year: **2023**
Platform: **C64**

This game is no big deal, Zuma is an evergreen classic

6 6 5

Balls like a Frog is a seemingly simple game loosely based on the Japanese game Pachinko. The directional nozzle in the centre of the screen shoots successive coloured balls through a board full of other coloured balls, forming a snake. The aim is to remove all objects from the board by hitting them, taking care not to mix colours. The incoming balls roll uniformly along a predetermined path, which is different for each level, but always ends with one or more skulls stuck in the ground. The game ends when the first ball falls into the skull. If you manage to complete the first stage, you will face seventy-six additional challenges on twenty-two maps. There is also a mode where you can choose a single level to test your skills.

This is a very enjoyable demake of the Zuma game, providing a lot of fun while a pleasant tune plays in the background. However, the C64's processor seems to be overloaded when displaying many balls at once, and the speed of the game itself suffers.

In short, *Balls like a Frog* has everything you need from a puzzle arcade game on the Commodore 64. It has a froggy sense of humour, a solid presence, many hours of play-time, balanced and refined gameplay, a perfect learning curve, excellent controls... and anyone can play it. ■

Agonman

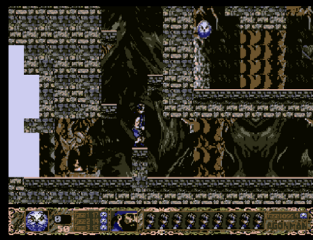
■ author: Sleeve / translation: Ari

In the 21st century, in the age of powerful computers generating 3D worlds in real time, a handful of enthusiasts still create entertainment software for old 16-bit machines. They don't need any special programming skills to do this, they just use game creators, in which you can "pick and mix" everything for yourself. Thanks to one such tool (RedPill), a group called Pixorra Games has written a platform game called Agonman.



The authors admit that they were inspired by the work of Edwin Van den Heuvel - creator of the most beautiful Amiga games - Agony

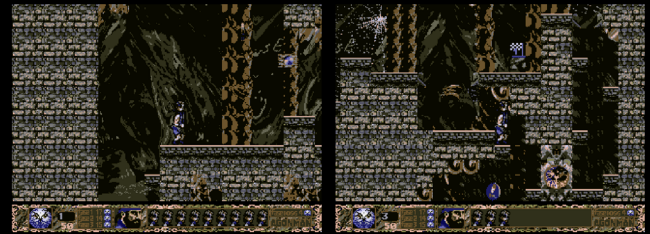
The platformer as it stands now, consists of three worlds separated by the powerful bosses. The available worlds are the classic locations well known to all fans of platform games - a cave, a tower and mountains. And just like in platformers - these worlds are inhabited by various creatures, which are just waiting to send our hero back to the last checkpoint without mercy. To keep things simple, at the beginning Agonman doesn't have any weapons, so the only way to traverse the worlds is to avoid monsters and traps. During his travels our hero finds disks that can be used to eliminate enemies, bombs needed to clear blocked passageways or balloons to quickly get to inaccessible areas of the map.



To spice things up, Psygnosis logos are scattered throughout each world (creators/publishers of such hits as Barbarian, Lemmings, Walker and Benefactor). It is not always necessary to collect all of them to complete a level, but as all real players know well - if you manage to collect the entire collection, you can count on additional bonuses.

An interesting solution used in Agonman is the non-linear gameplay. I'm leaving aside here the obvious searching of the map to find hidden locations and all the Psygnosis logos. The starting points of subsequent worlds vary depending on how we completed the previous level. If we add on top of that some simple puzzles, without the solution of which we will not open the passages, we get a game with very high replayability.

It is gratifying that new games are still being developed for our Amiga computers. However, I must mention that I also found some drawbacks. Agonman was created for Amiga with AGA chipset. Unfortunately - you can't see it at all. The game has only 16 colors, and on top of that the palette is poorly differentiated. Monsters often merge with the background, while some traps are confusingly similar to the things we have to collect, which means we often have to start the whole game from the beginning. In addition there are only two or three checkpoints on the entire map.



The quality of the assets themselves leaves a lot to be desired. At first glance, you can get the impression that this is a port from the C64, rather than an Amiga game. On top of that, the movement animations are not very smooth, you can see this especially when jumping. The positioning of monsters often causes teeth-gnashing, as there is no way to eliminate them. It's not possible to crouch, and their movement paths give you barely a few pixels of margin for error. Fortunately, the quickly growing frustration is mitigated by great music made by Zoltar (Dreamusic), thanks to which our imagination works at top speed, and the game itself evokes the "well, I'll try again" syndrome.

The software itself also has a few bugs. You have to go through the checkpoints slowly (a few times to be sure), otherwise they may not activate. Sometimes the effect sounds are cut off. But the worst thing is that if you lose all your lives during boss fights, the game can fail to reset the puzzles, and then all that's left is to reset the Amiga.

Is it worth it? I think it is. If you turn a blind eye to the visual layer, we get a quite playable and difficult platformer. Of course, it could be done much better, but for a programming experiment it is correct.

There are four downloadable LHA archives from the project website with versions of the game prepared for emulators and real Amigas: <https://pixorragames.itch.io/agonman>. ■

AGONMAN

Developer: **PixorraGames**
Release year: **2023**
Platform: **Amiga AGA**

Quite an experiment





Time for bed, guess I'll change

Geo's Quest 2 - In Search of Queen Lorraine

■ author: Retrobajtjel / translation: Ari



REVIEW

I went to bed around 11:30 p.m. I had the same dream again.... A dream that I have been dreaming about for a long time. A dream in which I move to the same distant worlds.... A dream in which I meet the same people. I don't know who they are and I don't know where I am. And I woke up again... But no! This dream was a little different, and at the end I heard the name Lorraine...

This is more or less how the story of our hero begins. He decides to solve the mystery of his unusual dreams.

The game Geo's Quest 2 - In Search of Queen Lorraine 2 was released.... after 20 years. Yes! Its author, Paul Golian, started working on it back in 2000, but after two years he unfortunately had to abandon the project. It was possible to find it online and play it, but it was an unfinished version, containing (as the author mentions) many bugs and shortcomings. However, Paul did not forget about the game and wanted to release it in the form he had dreamed of, so when he retired in 2022, he resumed work on the game. He put a lot of time and energy to polish, refine and finish it, and finally give pleasure to all the fans of classic adventures - releasing the final version into the world (for free). There is number „2“ in the title of the game, but it is not a sequel. The author marked the full version of the game in this way.

As I wrote earlier, the game is a typical point&click adventure, in which we help our protagonist Geo discover the mystery of his unusual dreams and find out who is Prin-

cess Lorraine, whose name he hears every night just before waking up. Since distant lands, recurring dreams and the princess are all connected, we go to Toro University to Professor Ali, who is an expert on lost worlds. It turns out that the professor knows (or actually knew) someone who also mentioned the princess' name. It's his colleague, Professor Goulds, who has unfortunately disappeared. Professor Ali gives us the key to his abandoned mansion. That's basically where our adventure begins.

Point&click fans will immediately be happy to see the typical "adventure" interface. "Use", "open", "take", "talk". - I feel at home, in fact, like in paradise.

I won't tell you the whole story, I hope there will still be an opportunity to do so, as I am still discovering its next chapters. I wouldn't be myself, however, if I didn't reveal a little of the mystery. At the beginning, we explore the estate of the missing Professor Goulds, where, in addition to several useful items, we also find his diary. It will be helpful in the further adventure in solving puzzles and thanks to it we will also learn a lot about its owner. During our search we

I had the same dream again,

will also find a passage to another dimension or, as you prefer, to a parallel world. There we will come to meet and get to know a devil-like monster named Vic 2, who has been sitting in his burrow for 26,000 years.... Sounds familiar? The code for the panel that opens the gate is also a combination of digits. Okay, I won't say anything more. There is no denying that Paul Golan's love was not only Amiga.

The adventure continues, and I'm lost somewhere in another dimension and I have been sitting here for about two hours. I need to find out who Lorraine is and why I dream about her every night. What is this strange and mysterious world I have been moved to? I'm also curious about the fate of Professor Goulds - where is he, is he alive, and will there be an opportunity to meet him at all? As you can see, the game makes you explore and seek answers... There are many questions, and curiosity is the first step to distant lands, to solve puzzles.

GQ2 reminds me a bit of Curse Of Enchantia, Goblins, Universe and my first contact with point&clicks when I fall in love with adventure games. And I really experienced a renewed thrill here when, with a shovel found in a storage room behind the house, I dug up the entrance to the cave, and with its broken handle propped up the falling metal gate through which I had entered to.... well, stop! Let me tell you that I play without any solution - the game is intuitive, and if we don't know something, we have a small hint system built into the descriptions of objects.

Finally, let me mention the audiovisual setting, which was also created by the author himself, Paul Golan - the true renaissance man - this is how games used to be made! I can say that the graphic design is decent. Maybe it's not the level of Fate Of Atlantis or the aforementioned Curse Of Enchantia, but the game looks nice and pleases the eye with its colorful, hand-drawn graphics. The backgrounds are animated, which is a big advantage, and the well-animated characters "play" their roles very well. And we don't have to aim the mouse to find an invisible object somewhere in the thicket of pixels. On top of all this, an atmospheric soundtrack that changes depending on the location plays in the background. Everything here is done as it should be - everything pleases and delights.

And let's remember that only one man worked on the game.

Respect to you, Mr. Golan, for returning to this title after 20 years. Thanks to you, we gamers can immerse ourselves in this interesting and engaging story on our Amigas, and all this completely free. ■

GEO'S QUEST 2

Developer: **Paul Golan**
Release year: **2023**
Platform: **Amiga**

A nice treat for Point & Click enthusiasts



Rick Dangerous RC GOLD

(enhanced version)

■ author: Retrobajtél / translation: Ari



In the days of my youth, although I think I am still young, there were several heroes we probably remember very well. We followed their adventures, admired them, and for a while we were them... Blocks of flats turned into ancient cities that we explored, the surrounding bushes were infested with traps that we built ourselves, and in the nearby woods perched high in the trees in our bases we watched over the area and lurked for enemies. Of course, none of us died then, at most the "metal spikes" from sticks after "piercing" the body left slight abrasions, and the enemies rose from the dead and returned home for dinner. Such were the adventures we had, often inspired by games or movies, which in those days were our gateway into fantastic worlds and forever left a lasting mark in our hearts.

The first VCR, videotapes taken from the neighborhood exchange and the first heroes I later played in computer games. My room became an Amazon jungle, a battlefield or a spaceship on a distant planet. Often the co-pilot - neighbour's kid- and the flight engineer, interchangeably the cannon operator - the other neighbour's kid - were also on board with me. And to describe what was going on there, and to express all those emotions, I think I lack words. The titles from Waldiko's compilations with their unique descriptions were eye-catching, especially the movie ones. And I think that's where I met Indy, although I think we met a little earlier, already on my ZX Spectrum.

You'd have to see the look on my face when, in the comfort of my home with the buzz of a power supply, the smell of warm plastic and the hum of a CRT TV, I was able to play the role of a guy in a hat, running around the Amazon jungle with a giraffe and dynamite. Wild paths led me through caves, temples or forgotten cities, and, leaping over traps, I escaped from falling rock blocks or boulders rolling straight at me. Not to mention the unfriendly natives who, in their strange masks, pursued me as soon as I came within their sight. Maybe it was the dynamite behind my belt... or the hat. Later, the same guy was running around the pyramids, shooting Nazis, only to end up at some secret base with rockets ready to be fired. There was stress, there was curiosity, and there was also a lot of fun to get more achievements and pass more chambers or levels.

And the same Indiana Jones, the hero who made his mark on the first personal computers in 1989, is back today in a new, refreshed setting! Oh, and the gentleman's name is Rick, not Indy. But he's basically just as adventurous and certainly no less daring, so I think we're talking about the same hero. In 2023 we lived to see an Amiga version of Rick's adventures from the Z-TEAM team, which created the game practically from scratch using a special engine, a game development tool called Scorpion Engine. This version has remastered graphics from an earlier port of the game on the Nintendo Wii, so you could say the remake is a backport. A little confusing, I know. I'll briefly explain... Imagine the storyline of the first installment, AGA chipset graphics from the Wii version and the mechanics created with the Scorpion Engine. And so the result is that we get good old Rick in a beautiful new version for our beloved Amiga: 1200, 4000 and CD32, well, and these new models, or actually emulators, which also do quite well at pretending to be the original hardware from our childhood. Oh, well, and the title screen got a cool new graphic featuring our brave hero.

As you may have already guessed, I had the opportunity to reincarnate as Harrison... eh... Rick Ford... Dangerous. As before, with dynamite behind my belt and a loaded gun, I set off into a world full of danger. And let me tell you that graphically the remastered Rick looks great. The gameplay is



EGYPT, SOMETIME LATER
RICK HEADS FOR THE PYRAMIDS AT
THE REQUEST OF LONDON.





dynamic and, of course, difficult, as it was in the original version, in which I learned from my mistakes and started again probably more times than some people die in souls-like games. The layout of the levels looks practically the same as in the original, although Rick's fans will surely quickly find minor differences in the placement of some elements. Of course, references to the movie inspiration can be found only in the first level, the Amazon jungle, where our hero's task is to find the lost Goolu tribe. And he finds them right after jumping on a parachute from a damaged plane. The tribe members, we don't know why, are furious with us and instead of trying to give us a friendly wave, they seem to prefer to eat us. And this is basically where our adventure begins - that is, a great escape from a jungle full of traps....

In the game we have a choice of levels, so if we fail to escape from the jungle, we can jump to the next location, where we perform the next task. Here's an interesting fun-fact, in the original version of the game from 1989 there was no choice of level and to move forward you had to complete the previous level. In the slightly revised version (released shortly after the premiere) such a choice was given by the authors. Many people thought it was a trainer, but it wasn't! The authors deliberately gave us the opportunity to allow us to see what's next. It's very nice that someone thought of me as well.

Going back to the new version of Rick, I have to write about a few annoyances that I found while exploring the game's world. I don't know if I'm the only one who can't, or maybe I haven't discovered how, but from what I remember, Rick used to carry a wooden stick with which he would paralyze enemies for a while. Here I can't find it or I'm doing something wrong... Also, after going to the next chamber you can't go back. The screen is locked. I fired up the old version of the game for a while to check my memory. In there you could go back to the previous location when you ran out of ammunition and wanted to escape from the enemy - well, and if necessary you could also treat the delinquent with the aforementioned stick. Here we do not have such an option. I also noticed that sometimes collisions of objects do not work properly, and it happened to me that, for example, I walked into a rock somewhere, or an enemy was hit by an arrow that had just flown through him, or some trap did not work properly. I also happened to lose a life right away during a respawn, and when I was climbing a ladder, I accidentally activated dynamite, which exploded somewhere in the background and disappeared without hurting me. It also seems to me that the old Indy used to jump a little higher, but you know, he is older and his health is no longer the same. Sight is also not the same, so maybe he jumps just as high after all? You'll have to check it for yourselves. But all this is just bullshit, except maybe the lack of possibility to return and the lack of a stick. What if I run out of dynamite or bullets, which do not replenish after losing a life - I have to look for them around the locations. Hmm... But still all these shortcomings don't take away the pleasure of playing, because it's really fun to play, besides, you can have it for free or donate the developers with some pennies, which I encourage you to do, because they did a really great job. Play, visit, explore, survive and don't complain. I have not mentioned anything about the sound, which, of course, is in the game, the effects are quite good, and in the background we can hear music that matches the atmosphere of the current location. That is, in Egypt we will not hear African rhythms and vice versa.

And what stays in your head for a long time is this famous "waah-hh" sound (guess whose voice it is) when Indy dies - sorry, Rick. After all, Indy didn't die, and neither did Rick - after all, they're superheroes, and superheroes live forever, even if we're the ones who make them die so many times. ■

RICK DANGEROUS RC GOLD

Developer: **Z-TEAM**
Release year: **2023**
Platform: **Amiga**

A new incarnation of Rick





Bertie's Animal Kingdom

■ author: Don Rafito / translation: Ari



REVIEW

The world of retrogaming is undoubtedly experiencing its good times. Interest in both hardware and software, and especially games, is consistently high. Their production is at a fairly high level - the Amiga, for example, gets several productions every year. Only lately Amiga players have started to notice that quantity does not always go hand in hand with quality.

First of all, we are talking about the duplication of core themes. And then you can read comments like: "oh, another platformer" or "oh no, another Sokoban" or "could you do something other than another Galaga clone? On the one hand, we should be happy that new titles are being developed all the time, but on the other hand, the classic Amiga has come a long way in terms of performance lately, and it would be worthwhile to start using it, even if they are mainly commercial releases.

So it's all the more pleasing that from time to time someone manages to bring back an item from the distant 90s. An item that didn't see release, didn't gain popularity and is even unknown, or after years has found its way to people who are now returning to retrogaming.

One of these is Bertie's Animal Kingdom, which was released in a very small edition, and the last mention of it is a review in the equally recent 2000 issue of Amiga Format, where it surprisingly did not get very high marks. Both of these facts translated into low popularity and oblivion. The issue contained two versions: a floppy disk and a CD, with the compact edition containing some additional levels and scenarios. Thanks to Ivan S., who contacted the musician who worked on the title, Darryl Sloan, the floppy disk version was brought back to life.

Bertie's Animal Kingdom is an educational game aimed mainly at younger players. We play the role of Bertie's helper, the title character, who is a farmer. The tasks that await us include learning the names of the animals, their sounds or their habits. The game also contains logical elements known as memory games. All of this is done in the English language. In this way, young people will not only have fun and learn how to use a computer, but will also improve their foreign language skills and train their perception and memory.



Adult players' first impressions of the graphics were that it was wasted potential, as it is a shame that this is only an educational game for children. In fact, the graphics in the game are not bad - accurate, clear and colourful, but not mottled. This is the way it should be, as it needs to catch the attention of younger players. At the same time, I feel a bit sorry that others, such as some contemporary Amiga titles, are not as polished.

The samples used in the title are also of a high standard. They are well done, recognisable and clear. The ear-friendly music module that plays on the title page fades to silence during gameplay, leaving us in the company of sounds and noises, so nothing distracts us.

The game is easy to play, with increasing levels of difficulty. Moreover, before starting the game, we can choose one of three variants: easy, normal and difficult. As you play, you acquire knowledge about the animals, which you can use in later stages.

One of the marketing tricks used in the 1990s to lure users to the PC was the hype surrounding all the "multimedia" encyclopedias and educational games that were being released. Bertie's Animal Kingdom is one such title. It's just a shame that it's a little too late. Nevertheless, I encourage you to show this interesting piece of Amiga software to your children. It's worth it. ■

BERTIE'S ANIMAL KINGDOM

Developer: Applaud /
Epic Marketing
Release year: 1998-2000
Platform: Amiga, min 2MB

Science and education go hand in hand



Maria Renard's Revenge

■ author: Don Rafito / translation: Ari

To get to know the title character, Maria Renard, we have to go back to 1986, when the first Castlevania was released, telling the story of Count Dracula and the vampire hunters of the Belmont Clan. Published by Konami for the Famicom, the game was also released on the NES a year later. The action takes place in the dungeons and chambers of the castle of the main character, Count Simon Belmont.



The first titles were dominated by the hunters of the Belmont family, with the character of Maria only appearing in the tenth part of the saga entitled Rondo of Blood. The game was released in 1993 for the TurboGrafx-16 console. The main character - Richter - is another of the family's hunters, while Maria herself, as a young girl and also his distant cousin, is kidnapped by Dracula's henchmen. In this part, our heroine is not the main character, but the victim. She becomes a playable character, able to attack with an owl and a cat, only when Richter rescues her.

The series continued to be developed primarily for PCs and consoles, with smartphones added over time. Castlevania also changed form, becoming non-linear, with story and RPG modes added. Maria also appeared, but in a supporting role and not always fully functional. It wasn't until the 13th instalment, Symphony of the Night, that the now-adult Maria appeared, still as a supporting character, but fully playable. In this case, she has the opportunity to return the favour by investigating her cousin's disappearance.

In addition to the games released as standalone projects, Castlevania also has a Japanese animated series. A feature film was also planned.

And so we arrive in 2023, when Z-team, using the Scorpion engine, develops and releases for the Amiga CD32 (and other AGA machines) a platformer in which, for the first time in the history of the series, not counting the addition of Part 23 - Portrait of Ruin, Maria is a main and fully playable character. Our heroine, traditionally armed with an owl and a cat, has to overcome four dark levels and equally dark enemies on her way to the castle: from bugs and rats to skeletons, demons and bosses. The final battle is against Count Dracula himself.

Graphically, the game looks decent. You can see the pixel art closely following the NES style. Levels are detailed and clear, with correct colours, lighting and depth. The downside is the slightly poor animation frame rate of some characters.

The sound design is slightly worse than the graphics. Admittedly, there is a variety of music modules in each level, but they are poor, slow-moving and, although they try to create a horror mood, they fall far short of the full effect. As for the samples, they are rather sparse and a little muffled. In general, the whole game sounds like a small child sleeping behind the wall and not to be woken up.

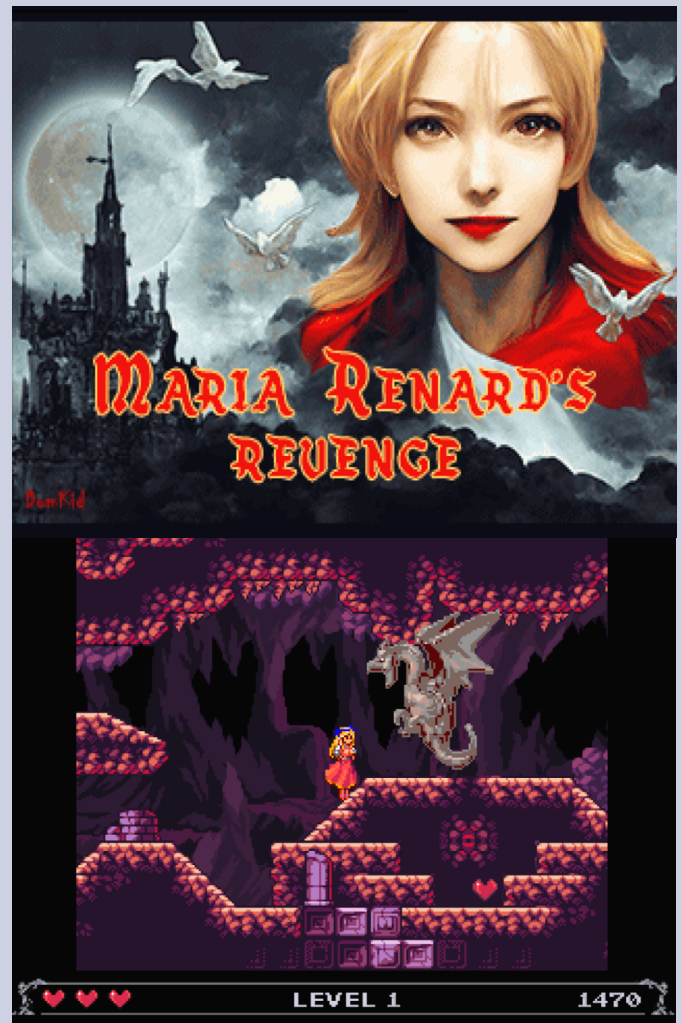
The playability is not the best either. At first, Maria's response to joystick movements is a little delayed, which is

probably due to the Scorpion engine, but you get used to it after a while. During production, the game was treated as a way of learning how to use this engine, as the author notes in the description. The game is free of charge (with voluntary financial contribution), which somewhat explains the shortcomings, but I suspect that the authors are still working on it. In any case, the production is not bad and it is worth spending an evening getting to know it. ■

MARIA RENARD'S REVENGE

Developer: Z-team
Release year: 2023
Platform: Amiga CD32/1200/4000

Count Dracula will once again have trouble falling asleep





Franko

the violent legacy of the proletariat

■ author: Tommysi / translation: Tomxx



FELIETON

To this day, Poland during the period of systemic transformation is a subject that can be discussed in many different ways. In many reports, this period is often referred to as the "Polish Wild West". This is, of course, a reference to Polish society's attempt to find itself in the completely new circumstances of a liberal-democratic, free-market state. Just as the first settlers of North America had to find their way in a new land full of wilderness.

Poland at the time was a nascent and expanding capitalism on the one hand, and the remnants of a crude communism on the other. It was also a time of gang warfare, judicial problems, a plague of car theft and exponentially rising unemployment. Swindlers and fraudsters were an everyday feature of Polish capitalism. In other words, this period in Poland's history provided the perfect conditions for the growth of social inequalities, including, above all, the exclusion of the least privileged, who could not effectively answer the question: how can we succeed in the new reality? And from such exclusion it is only a small step to growing frustration, hopelessness and, finally, violence, of which there was quite a lot on the Polish streets at that time.

So why do so many of us remember it with such fondness and nostalgia? I think the answer to this question is very simple - for many of us it was simply the time of our childhood. As toddlers and then teenagers, we viewed the world around us through a somewhat naive, childish prism. Much of the credit for this must go to our parents, who managed to create a safe environment for us to develop and prepare us for life in a new world of almost limitless possibilities.

One of the people who had to grow up in this very interesting and dangerous period was Mariusz Pawluk from Szczecin, a graphic designer, animator and computer game developer. It is no coincidence that I highlight Szczecin here, as it is one of the ten largest cities in Poland, full of prefabricated apartment blocks, an image very characteristic of Polish housing estates. Mariusz became an avid computer user in the late 1980s, making his first programming attempts on a ZX Spectrum computer. Mariusz's backyard friend and neighbour was Sławek Mrozek - a creator of music and sound effects for Amiga games. Sławek's friend, on the other hand, was Tomasz Tomaszek - a programmer. All three knew each other from the days of exchanging software for ZX Spectrum computers. During their high school years, on the initiative of Mariusz Pawluk, the friends formed a group called World Software. It was a typical initiative born out of a youthful passion to create a computer game. The name of the group was born in Mariusz's mind in the days of playing with the ZX Spectrum computer, when he began to sign his first attempts at programming and screenwriting.

The reason for working on the game together was very simple: Mariusz loved beat'em ups, but the only place he could play them was in arcades. Productions like Double Dragon and Golden Axe were very popular at the time.

However, there was nothing good in the genre for Amiga computers at that time, except maybe a port of Final Fight from the Sega Mega Drive. And it was not enough for Mariusz. As he said in an interview with Benedykt Dziubaltowski on PPA.pl (28.02.2008): "We made Franko for ourselves because we wanted to play something that was relevant to us".

At first, Tomek gave the game the working name "Franio". This somewhat childish title reflected the approach of its creators, who did not take their work too seriously. It was only over time, as the project began to take shape, that Franio became Franko. Franko, in turn, became Franko: Idiots Killer, and this, 'at the request' of the publisher, became Franko: The Crazy Revenge.

Franko's plot begins in 1987 in Szczecin. At the time, the city was one of the main transit points for goods smuggled from Western Europe (mainly Germany). These goods largely came from the theft of so-called "juma", which is ironically described as "a secondary, Slavic, equitable distribution of personal wealth" (see the film Yuma, 2012). The game's protagonists are Franko and Alex, who waste time in the grey reality with daily martial arts training. During one of their nightly walks through the dangerous streets of Szczecin, they are stopped by the Klock gang - the biggest smugglers in the city. A fight ensues, during which Franko and Alex are knocked unconscious. When Franko regains consciousness, he discovers that his friend is dead. He then swore revenge on Klock and, after a series of training sessions, began a solo crusade. In an interview with PPA.pl, Mariusz Pawluk insists that the plot was in no way inspired by his personal experiences.

The fact is, however, that the first stage of Franko takes place in Rydla Street (a housing estate on the right bank of Szczecin) and the second stage in Aleja Niepodległości (English: Independence Avenue, the city centre). The boss we meet in the game was also inspired by a real-life character - Piotras, the owner of a pirate software shop called Amisoft. This shop was located nearby and as far as I could find out, this was the now defunct 'Odra' clothing factory, where Galeria Kaskada is now located.

Extensive research also led me to the information that the Mic Mac - World of Hamburgers bar we see at one point in the game is a real, now-defunct restaurant. Mic Mac was the first fast-food bar in Szczecin, a kind of replacement for McDonald's, which appeared later on the ground floor of the aforementioned 'Odra' clothing store. It was very popular because it was an absolute novelty in a time of burgeoning capitalism, associated with the modern



Western world and different from what we had to deal with in the rough times of communist Poland. As we can read on the blog szczecin.blogx.pl in the article "Mic Mac and Coca-Cola... or the first breath of America in Szczecin in the 1990s.", the pubs on the main avenues were such important places on the city's gastronomic map that a rather peculiar subculture of Mic Macs emerged. Characterised by lifestyle and dress - young people in sportswear, leather jackets and hairstyles described as "the sides short, the back long and a lot of gel" spent almost all day there. For this reason, the Mic Mac was a place associated not only with burgers, but also with the cheap lingo of 'worldly man' and 'businessman's kid'. However, it lost its popularity when branches of well-known global chains - McDonald's and Burger King - appeared in Szczecin and the bars of this chain eventually disappeared from the streets of Szczecin. Interestingly, in 1993 the Mic Mac bar hosted an art exhibition called "Coca-Cola Changes the World". Now there is a KFC restaurant at 13 Aleja Niepodległości, which is also a very symbolic sign of the times.

But back to the game itself. In terms of the technology used to make it, Franko is a very poor, not to say hopeless, production. And I do not mean that the game has not stood the test of time and aged ugly. Franko was already a reprehensible production on the day of its release. Both the graphics and the animation look like they were done in a very hasty and careless manner. A bit like art homework done on your knees five minutes before class starts. Not much more can be said about the music, whose themes are short and uninteresting. Some of the samples were probably stolen from other games, and the originals, which represent the folklore of Polish streets at the time, are of very poor quality. Nevertheless, they have achieved almost legendary status. Many of us remember "spadaj, piedolo" (English: "Get lost, you fucker"), for example.

At the very beginning of the game, we are given the opportunity to choose one of two characters: Franko or Alex. They are slightly different in appearance and in their 'punch'. The very fact that you can choose Alex is a logical incongruity since, as we know from the story, he died in a skirmish with Klock's gang. Note: Franko: The Crazy Revenge does not allow two players to play at the same time, which is a characteristic of beat'em ups. The game also has a menu that is of almost no use. I understand that it's only there to make Franko look more like a full-fledged computer game - I can't see any other use for it.

The mechanics of the game itself are not much better. As Amiga joysticks only had one or two fire buttons, we perform individual attacks by pressing the fire button together with tilting the joystick in one of eight directions. The fact that, after grabbing your opponent, we can also use the combination of fire and direction, which results in several new attacks: from the head, knee or elbow, deserves special praise. It is also possible to knock out opponents who are already lying down. As you can see, there is no shortage of the types of blows we can inflict on our opponents. However, the fun is spoiled by the game's embarrassingly low difficulty level, the lack of any intelligence on the part of our opponents, and the absence of the special punches so typical of walking brawlers. Nor does the game allow you to pick up and use weapons or interact with the environment in any other way. Basically, the only way to get through the plot is with a combination of punches. There are four types of enemy: gangsters, karate men, policemen and zombies. The game is divided into three stages, each of which ends with a fight against a boss, who is nothing more or less than a slightly larger opponent with no special abilities. Between the stages, there is a short bonus round consisting of a daring drive in a Fiat 126p (this car was used by Polish families during the communist era). This ride is rewarded with extra energy and even extra lives - in return for smashing our opponents. Running over innocent mothers with children or old ladies, on the other hand, will result in a loss of energy. Completing each level also gives you an access code to the next stage. Throughout the game we see a counter at the bottom of the screen for the number of enemies we have killed, which, as you can imagine, allows us to set new records. And that's about all we can say about Franko as a computer game.

Despite all the clunkiness described above, Mirage Software decided to release Franko: The Crazy Revenge in official distribution in 1994. Apparently, the production made such a good impression on the publisher that they did not even expect the developers to improve the graphics. Fans of Franko (and I make no secret of the fact that I do not count myself among them) claim that the game's technical clunkiness receded after playing it; in other words, it gains on closer acquaintance. In fact, Franko's 'peculiar' graphic and sound design turned out to be an advantage, as it supposedly enhanced the atmosphere perfectly. One aspect of the game that the publisher undoubtedly managed to influence was the number of disks on which it was released. "If the three of us at World Software had put all the planned ideas into Franko, the game would have taken up twelve discs". As we know, it was finally released on three. Mariusz, Sławek and Tomek had ambitions to include, among other things, many more cut-scenes, including some really obscene ones, text in clouds and sampled chatter spoken by characters.



Franko was a publishing success. Suffice it to say that the game was reviewed by the country's biggest games magazines, which gave it very high marks. Even Polish television briefly featured Franko in one of its thematic programmes. As further proof of the game's publishing success, a port of Franko for IBM PCs was released in 1996. The three from World Software were not involved in the production of this version, mainly due to the distance between Szczecin and Warsaw and the lack of internet in Poland at the time. It is impossible to find information about how many original copies were sold. I don't think even the developers of the game know. Mariusz Pawluk, when asked in an interview quoted above "what was the reason for ending cooperation with Mirage?" replied with: "What usually happens in such cases. We felt that the company had become too much for us. I don't want to say anything more about that. However, I would like to point out that at the time Mirage was the only company in Poland that was realistically interested in us. The others didn't even reply to our letters, they didn't even know what we had to offer. I think they regretted afterwards". This reminds me of one of the many situations in the music industry, especially in the 1990s, when a somewhat naive artist was duped by his publisher into a contract that was unfavourable to the artist. Apparently, the gentlemen at World Software did not go too wild with the money they made from Franko, and used it mainly to buy computers and hardware for themselves.

The popularity of Franko made the planning of its next release inevitable. Before that, however, another World Software game should be mentioned. Another walking brawler, Street Hassle was, according to its creators, partly a joke and partly a tribute to the original ZX Spectrum version released by Beam Software. The Szczecin trio did not even plan to publish this production, it was Mirage Software that insisted on it. The first public presentation of Street Hassle took place before the official release of Franko. It took place in 1993 at the Autumn Party in Poznań. The title was so well received that World Software thought it would be a good idea to distribute it legally.

The plans for Franko 2, like those for the first game, were very ambitious. To name just a few of the ideas that were to be implemented: the choice of one of four characters (each with a different fighting technique), the possibility of using weapons, countless interactive cutscenes, special blows using elements of the environment, such as smashing an opponent's head on the bonnet of a car, throwing him through a window, or throwing him into a rubbish bin and hitting his head with the lid. This time, the game was meant to be more than just a silly smash and grab. What's more, the amount of content planned for the game meant that it could not be released on floppy disks. So a CD was chosen as the target medium and an Amiga 1200 as the target platform. For reasons unknown to me, the work on the Amiga version of Franko 2 stopped at the planning stage.

It was not until 2003 that the subject was revisited and Franko 2, subtitled 'No Mercy', was actually made. Mariusz Pawluk was personally involved in the project. This time the target platform for the production was the Gameboy Advance. The GBA had a very good potential for creating games of this type, which would undoubtedly allow the creators of Franko 2 to spread their wings and use most of their ideas. It was a technical potential that the Amiga

computers definitely lacked. For this project Adam Goiński was hired as programmer instead of Tomasz Tomaszek. The first phase of work on Franko 2: No Mercy went well. Its creators already had the skeleton of the game and the outline of the first stage. They were working on a demo version of the game, which they planned to present to a US publisher. For some reason, however, the developers failed to take into account the 'family' nature of Nintendo and the games released on its platforms. It soon became clear that there was no chance of Franko 2: No Mercy being legally released on the Gameboy Advance. The developers of the game were no longer high school students, which meant they had neither the time nor the enthusiasm to create a game that could not be monetised.

Studio World Software was also working on the game "Kajko i Kokosz - The kidnapping of Mirmil". This title, too, was already marginally complete. However, a change of publisher and the prioritisation of the Franko 2 project described above meant that also this game never saw the light of day.

Wanting to be consistent, I must also mention Draggy and Croco. Interestingly, this game was completely finished. Not only that, but about a thousand copies were already pre-packaged and waiting to be shipped to the shops. This, however, never happened. The game distribution process had somewhat outgrown the publisher at the time. In addition, at the time the publisher was managing several other businesses, unrelated to the gaming industry, and it was on these that they focused his attention entirely.

There was, however, one other game that World Software Studio managed to complete and officially release for a change, right next to Franko. This was Doman: Ardan's Sin, a walking brawler deceptively reminiscent of Franko, but set in a medieval (dark fantasy?) setting. This title, like Franko, was characterised by a high level of brutality in its gameplay. What distinguishes Doman from Franko is undoubtedly the fact that this production was more polished. The graphics and gameplay mechanics were improved and, most importantly, two players could play at the same time. There was also a very funny easter egg - at one point in the game we get to meet the Franko we know so well. Doman was very well received by players and critics alike. Despite all these advantages of Doman over Franko, for some reason it is the latter that has carved out a more permanent place in the public consciousness.

This is certainly why, in 2013, another attempt was made to return to the Franko 2 project, this time with the subtitle "Revenge is back". The game's authors decided to support their project with a modern method of financing - crowdfunding. Almost PLN 40,000 was raised, which was 112% of the required amount. At the beginning, nothing seemed to indicate an impending disaster - a reputable crowdfunding company (wspieram.to) was behind the collection, the project was signed by Tomasz Tomaszek, among others, and the media was full of assurances that the game was halfway finished and not much was missing before its release. Among the ambassadors of the supposedly nascent game were internet personalities such as Krzysztof Gonciarz and Remigiusz Maciaszek (Rock).

First, the project was delayed again and again, then the internet was flooded with information that the delays were



caused by the departure of one of the developers, and finally all those responsible for "Franko 2: Revenge is back" stopped commenting on the matter. In 2016, Franko 2: RiB made the headlines again for a moment, thanks to members of the group The Company - Classic Amiga Games, who decided to file a criminal complaint with the prosecutor's office. The latest information (2019) I could find about this project was an interview on PSX Extreme, in which Mariusz Pawluk explains: "Franko 2, which you know from the campaign on wspieram.to, was cancelled because, despite the passage of several years, the developers were unable to deliver the quality that would have satisfied the

creators and the fans. As I found out, despite several years of work, there wasn't even a combat system developed.

This is not the end of the turbulent history of the Franko 2 project, which, as you can see, has changed several times over the years: the subtitle, the target platform, the development engine, the developers themselves or the publisher. In the end, the game WILL BE produced by Blue Sunset Games in collaboration with World Software and Console Labs as publisher and released as "Skinny & Franko: Fists of Violence". As we can read on the games-online.pl website, "The action of the game takes place twenty-eight years after the events of the first part. After orchestrating a bloody massacre on the streets of Szczecin and avenging his friend Alex, Franko left Poland and spent several decades in exile. Finally, being older and more experienced, he returns to his homeland to help his friend Chudy, once again facing off against local criminals and gangsters. Like its predecessor, the game is set in Polish reality and contains plenty of vulgar, brutal and explicit humour. In terms of gameplay, Fists of Violence is a two-dimensional beat-'em-up in which we traverse a variety of stages and fight groups of opponents at once. The characters have a variety of punches and techniques at their disposal, which they can combine into combos. All sorts of weapons are scattered around the maps - sticks, knives, pipes, firearms - that can temporarily aid us in battle. Powerful special and environmental attacks are also available - we can smash windows with the head of a captured enemy, for example. The title is divided into eight levels, each set in a different location. We will also face tough and dangerous bosses and drive a car. Skinny & Franko: Fists of Violence allows you to play through the campaign alone or with a friend in two-player local co-op. One player takes the role of Skinny and the other takes the role of Franko. The characters have different gameplay styles and different punches to choose from". The new Franko will be released on PC, PS4, Xbox One and Nintendo Switch (well, like Nintendo, can you do it?). The game has been announced for release on 28 April 2023. By the time you read these words, many of you will have finished Fists of Violence - I'm really curious to hear your impressions and opinions.

At some point in this column I mentioned that I do not consider myself a fan of Franko: The Crazy Revenge, but I must clarify that I do consider myself a fan of Franko as a phenomenon. In 1994, we got a mediocre game, but one that everyone was waiting for. A Polish game, about Polish themes, set in Poland. Franko was a bit like Polish rap from the early 1990s - it was about what was really happening here. Franko was also a way of making fun of the grey reality around us at the time. I think the more difficult the times we live in, the more we need that kind of safety valve. We need something to puncture the already over-inflated balloon of everyday problems and struggles. Franko also has historical value - it is like a postcard from the time of Poland's political transformation. Franko is also the history of Polish gamedev, our programming backyard from high school. For me, however, Franko is first and foremost the story of the people behind it. People with great ambitions, once hampered by technological limitations, now hampered by the mundanity of life and everyday responsibilities. Yet these people do not give up and believe in a happy ending. I believe in it too. So I wish them, and all of you, good luck. ■



How dangerous is the Scorpion?

■ author: Tomasz „Razor” Kaniecki / translation: Tomxx

If a fortune teller had told me in 1992 that one day in the distant future I would be using one of the most controversial joysticks on the market, I would have laughed at her. But life is full of surprises and that's how I ended up with the famous hardware proudly called Scorpion...

Thanks to the MATT company from Łódź, Poland (yes, it's the same company since 1991!) I had the opportunity to test three of their products for you, and of course one of them interested me the most - the famous Scorpion. First of all, I have to tell you which games I used for testing - there were three titles: Tokyo Race, Microprose Soccer and Bruce Lee. A trained eye will probably notice that I did not choose the typical joystick-breaker games for the test, i.e. all sorts of Olympics and decathlons. These are games that even the best products from the QuickJoy stable have to give up on.

I'll start with the simplest model, the JOYSTICK MATT AF, because it was the first one I connected to the C64. Its appearance reminds me of the joystick that came with the console that I'm sure everyone knows - the Atari 2600 clone with the menacing name of RAMBO (if Sylvester Stallone had known that his facsimile was on the box... But well, those were different times...). Unfortunately, due to the poor quality of the materials used, these joysticks had a very limited lifespan. That's what I thought about the MATT AF, but it turns out that it works and hasn't broken yet. The joystick does not crack or squeak when used.

The MATT AF has a cable of about 120 cm, which is of course terminated with a DE-9 (9-pin) plug, and a round base that sticks to the table thanks to four suction cups. There are two fire buttons, of which the one in the base has an auto-fire option. The simple design is also an advantage of the MATT AF. The stick reacts to swings without delay. The only complaint I have is the occasional click when tilting to the left, which is not detrimental to use but can be a little annoying. Maybe it was just my copy?



None of the titles I played gave me any problems. I sometimes had trouble getting a good jump in Bruce Lee, but perhaps that is a symptom of my age, lol. People with oversized hands may have the same problem, but I had no issue with the fit.

Another joystick I was about to torture is the Boomerang B101. It's a pretty fancy pad with a cable of almost 200 centimetres in length. This time I was reminded of a Pegasus clone in which I had a pad similar in appearance and colour (I think it was Batman?).



There are three fire buttons, which work in the same way (this model has no auto), and the two unused coloured buttons (they are for the 200 series models for PCs). The pad sits well in the hand, the case is solid and doesn't creak, the fire buttons are fine, but once again there was a click, this time when using the down crosshairs. I am not particularly demanding, but using the directional pads is too noisy. The situation is remedied by the gadgets included in the box, namely a yellow extension and an orange plastic cap. Applying one of these makes things a little quieter. On the other hand, not everyone will like this solution. In Microprose Soccer, the pad wasn't quite up to the task of controlling a football, but it made up for it in Tokyo Race when it came to driving a car.

Finally, we are left with the title character of this article, the Lord and Master called Scorpion. From the moment it was launched (I remember an advertisement in the Polish magazine titled Top Secret), this joystick was controversial, it certainly had a buzz and everyone had heard of it. The design was futuristic for the 90s. The joystick could be used in two positions, desktop and manual, which undoubtedly made it stand out.

As with the Boomerang, we also have a 200cm long cable. The joystick is equipped with a single fire button, which has a very short travel, so it takes some getting used to, and we also have a fire button lock (the fixed position locks it in the pressed position, while the manual position gives us control over it). Not much more, underneath we have the AF/ST button (auto fire or regular fire). And now for the most important thing: the repositioning ring - it sounds intimidating, but it's not at all. If you want the Scorpion to work like any other joystick, you put it in the desk in an unfolded position, while if you don't have a desk, you can put the joystick in, hmmm, portable mode? You lift the ring, pull one of the legs and there you go! You hold the joystick with one hand and steer with the other.



Does it work? In my opinion, yes, in none of the games tested did I have a problem with the controls, the joystick has short swings, as short as the aforementioned fire jump, but it responds well and is very quiet while playing.

The Scorpion was not around when I was young, so I had no experience of it. I only knew about it from hearsay and newspaper reviews. Any drawbacks? Not everyone will like it, you can complain about the bizarre shape, maybe a bit of an imprecise fit of the case, but the joystick works as expected and so far bravely withstands the successive titles I play on it.

Time for summary. The first two units need improvement, if only because of the aforementioned clicking during play, while the Scorpion is a legend whether you like it or not - it deserves a place in the showcase next to your Commodores.

P.S. MATT has sponsored a prize of a brand new boxed unit of the Scorpion, like it was straight out of 1991 and a retro poster of Godzilla himself (or at least his sister). Details to follow on our social media, good luck! ■



With dice and pencil Challengers!

author: Tomasz „RAZOR” Kaniecki / translation: Tomxx

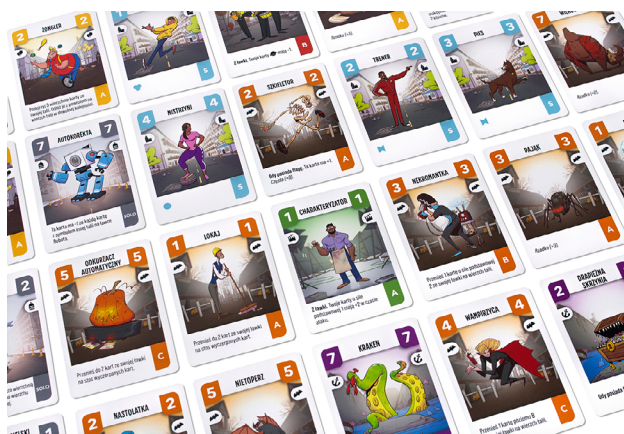


REVIEW

We begin a journey through the world of board games on K&A+. It's true that we all try to spend our free time with our beloved Commodore products, but sometimes we need a break (e.g. due to lack of electricity). There is a great alternative in the form of board games, which have come a long way in recent years, even for single players.

Our series starts with a review of the game 'Challengers!', sent to us by Rebel Publishing. Let's see what awaits us when we pick it up.

The game description begins with a brief introduction: "Supported by a female Bard, the Kraken has just captured the flag. The enemy is about to attack... Get ready to counter with the Necromancer and the Rubber Duck! Unconventional alliances are the order of the day, as teams of aliens, monsters from the depths of the ocean, and other unearthly characters join forces arm in arm for the common goal of winning the world's greatest flag capturing tournament! Does this sound like a fan's dream of Lovecraft's prose or fantasy? It kind of does. The game is in the style of a 'deck builder', basically all the mechanics are based around building your deck, which you use to fight the other players. And here's the interesting thing - players can range from 1 all the way up to 8! If you choose to play solo, you will face a so-called 'automaton' (this is the term used in board games for an opponent who acts as a second player and follows pre-set rules). Playing solo is by no means inferior, and my test game was actually more difficult than playing against a live opponent (you can sort of read through your live opponent's mind, can't you?).

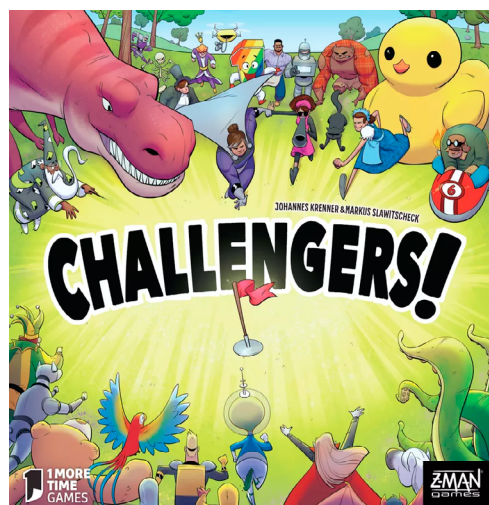


The rules are simple, you can play with your children from the age of 8, and the basic idea is to capture the flag and reach the final duel by elimination, which will decide whether an alien civilization will take over Earth.

The partner of board games reviews page in our magazine is:

rebel

Duels take place in parks (which are represented in the game by cloth, coloured and rolled mats - a cool idea!) Players take turns playing cards from their decks and compare their strength: the stronger card takes the flag. Play until one player has filled all the park benches on their side with discarded cards from their deck. Then you add up the points, take your deck and swap places with the other players, making it a one-on-one game (with two players, the game is much shorter; with an odd number of players, you draw a deck of strangers, as in a solo game).



Some cards have special abilities that are worth using during a skirmish. Speaking of cards, the illustrations are interestingly drawn, there are over 300 of them, and they have a slightly cartoonish style, which gives the game a light atmosphere and can be played by almost anyone. In addition to the mats, cards and tokens (called supporters here), there are plastic containers for the decks, which make the game a lot easier to play.

"Challengers!" is a great product for people who are not convinced by board or card games. The simple rules make it a good choice for children, and the ability to play with 8 people makes it a great idea for a Sunday afternoon with the family. ■

CHALLENGERS!

Publisher: **Rebel.pl**
Release year: **2022**

Contents of the box:

336 cards
4 park tiles
4 flag tokens
40 supporter tokens
28 trophy tokens
3 card trays
2 instructions

On another subject

Martial arts and games

through the eyes of the younger generation

■ author: Komek / translation: Toby



We've never really verified this, but there are many indications that about 95% of our readers are in their late 30s. There's nothing surprising about that - after all, Commodore and Amiga are computers of the 80s and 90s. You're about to engage with something quite unconventional on the pages of our magazine. As you already know, the theme of the current issue is martial arts and brawling, so we decided to conduct a short interview with Kewin Blachotnik - a young MMA fighter who also likes video games. Without further ado, let's listen to his thoughts on sports and games.



INTERVIEW

Hi Kewin, it's a pleasure to have you here with us. Tell us, what made you so interested in martial arts?

Hi, I was inspired to do this by my late mother and her brother, who to this day is a kyokushin and K1 coach. I actually started by practicing martial arts with kyokushin as early as 7 years old. I must admit I did quite well, and the subsequent achievements were very important for me.

My deepest sympathies for the loss of your mom. You mentioned that she was an inspiration to you - could you tell us more about that?

My late mother was a karate competitor in her teens and achieved a lot in this discipline. She impressed me a lot with her character and psyche, and before her death she was a coach.

For what reason did you choose MMA?

I have always been interested in mixed martial arts, even when I was just training karate. At that time I used to watch KSW or UFC federation galas. Being able to, some day, take part in such an event was my biggest dream.

What do your training sessions look like and how frequent are they?

I train five times a week. On Monday I do K1 training, or stand-up. On Tuesday I do BJJ (Brazilian jiu-jitsu - editor's note) training - aka ground fighting - at another club. On Wednesday it's K1 and on Thursday BJJ, and on Friday I train on my own in my hall, where I do endurance training.

Please share with us your achievements - what trophies have you managed to win so far?

At the moment, I don't have much to boast about, due to the fact that I just turned 18 in February and have been fighting amateurishly until now.

What do you feel when preparing for a fight and how do you act then?

I feel, above all: stress, great focus on the goal, and the desire to win. It's hard to be around me at that

We know you like video games. So tell us which ones specifically? Please, list your favorite titles.

Oh yes! I like to play on the PS5. I mainly get excited about fast and powerful action, as it drives me. My top titles probably won't surprise anyone, because they are quite popular: UFC 4, Call of Duty and FIFA 23. I recommend all MMA fans to play UFC 4, because it is an extremely realistic game. It was released a few years ago by Electronic Arts, but nevertheless it gives me a great experience every time. First of all, it is more realistic than its predecessor,

UFC 3, and has better controls. In addition, a cool option is the so-called career mode, where we can decide on various things that later affect the future of our fighter. UFC 4 stirs up so much emotion in me that I can get really upset sometimes - in a positive sense of course. Anyway, my gamepads haven't suffered any damage.

While we're on the subject of games, tell me, did you ever happen to play something really old from before your generation?

Of course I have. Among other things, the old Super Mario Bros. It's a very cool and addictive game. I often played it as a kid. I generally remember those times very fondly.

Thank you very much for the interview and we wish you the best for your sports career, which means good health and lots of victories.

I also thank you and greet all the readers and the entire editorial staff of the magazine! ■



moment, because I'm only thinking about the fight and going through the motions in my head.

As you mentioned, this year you celebrated your 18th birthday. Tell us, what impact does this have on your future sports career?

Coming of age gives me the opportunity to commute to another club for training and greater prospects for development, with professional fights already in play.



TALKING HEADS

The golden age of arcades

Hello, this is Agnieszka FPWG and I'll be hosting today's episode of FPWG, and together with the editorial team, we'll be talking about the golden age of arcades. Sounds familiar and nostalgic, doesn't it? But before we start the conversation, I would just like to add that back in the 1990s, the Estate Arcade was my 'second home'. I have very fond memories of the rooms that housed the machines. The atmospheric twilight, the flashing screens and the sounds coming from all directions put me in an unusual state. I used to spend a lot of time there, playing Rival Schools, Tekken, Cadillacs and Dinosaurs and many others. But when MK2 came out, it instantly became my favourite title, and it has stayed with me to this day. Let us expand on that and tell you about our impressions of those years.

Agnieszka FPWG: I was always jealous of arcade games. Why, for example, an MK2 looked so much better than the home computer versions (I had an A500 at home). It was pure joy to play my favourite games on big machines that shone like a brand new car. My mother would only give me two Polish zloty to play, and I could only go to the arcades at weekends. Each time, I felt like I was putting fifty pennies into a time machine that showed me what home console games would look like in five years' time. It was a surreal experience.

Tomxx: The secret to the capabilities of arcade machines comes from the fact that they were made for a particular game. The motherboards of such machines could be upgraded with additional chips or memory modules and neither budget nor the physical dimensions of the board were an issue. Hence better sound, more beautiful graphics and sometimes more developed content. Arcade games were often ported to home computers, but this required a lot of dexterity on the part of the programmers, and usually ended up truncating the game content anyway. Like Agnieszka, I was quite sad about this, but happily merged the two worlds.

My first memories of arcades are of ... wheeled carts. It probably won't evoke any associations in our foreign readers, but Polish gamers grew up in makeshift barracks on wheels called Drzymala carts in our country. They were dark, crowded and smelled of wood, sweat and cigarettes (not necessarily in that order). I don't know why so many arcade cabs appeared in our country, but these

types of carts could easily be found in every town. Perhaps they were indeed mobile and the owners transported them from place to place. In any case, when I think back to my first contact with video games, I have myself dropping an old Polish 20 zloty coin into the Asteroids machine. And then there were the sounds that became part of my life.

Komek: If I remember correctly, I started my arcade adventure in 1988 (I'm an old man now). This magical world of video games was right next to the block of flats where I lived, so I could literally go there in my slippers. The small living room (20 m2)

Each time, I felt like I was putting fifty pennies into a time machine that showed me what home console games would look like in five years' time. It was a surreal experience.

– Agnieszka FPWG





could only accommodate seven arcade machines and a pinball flipper. Imagine what it was like when most of the kids and teenagers from a large housing estate wanted to get into this cloister to play their favourite games. Slot machines were scarce, but luckily they were regularly replaced with new ROMs, so you couldn't complain about the lack of new games. Favourite titles that stick in my mind are Ghosts 'n Goblins, Truxton, Haunted Castle, The Lord of King aka The Ashtynax, Defender, Wonderboy in Monsterland, Swordsman, Kung-Fu Master, Rabbit Punch... Ah, I could go on and on. Anyway, my number one game at the time was Haunted Castle (the second game in the Castlevania series), which captivated me with its dark atmosphere. The same was true of The Lord of King, which is essentially similar to Haunted Castle. My favourite of the three closes with Wonderboy in Monsterland, which I played later on my C64, admittedly not with such good graphics, but in the end it was Wonderboy. In general, I remember those times very fondly. I would give a lot to go back to those times, at least for a while.

Erik: The summer holidays of the eighties were spent on my parents' sailboat which sailed the coastline of Belgium, France and the United Kingdom. I hated the long waiting times, 24 hours to cross the channel to the UK while wind and waves made you uncomfortable. But once in the UK my bad mood quickly faded: Arcades! Mesmerised by the lights and sounds I totally adored those places. My favorite games were Galaxians and Galaga later followed by Gyruss. I was very happy with the excellent C64 conversion of that game; it saved me a lot of coins! Later still, I loved the Star Wars vector graphics game in which you have to destroy the Death Star. Because it was a sit in cabinet the sound effects and samples from the movie sounded very impressive. The whole cabinet shook when the Death Star exploded! I occasionally return to the game using MAME but it isn't the same. You can't beat the arcade experience!

Piana: I don't have fond memories of arcades. Crowded and smelly, and a waste of money for me.

Razor: This story goes back to the late 1980s, when I discovered a game arcade in the form of a wooden shed standing on bricks behind a greengrocer's near my block. The place had a mysterious aura and the smell of hot cathode ray tubes. There were only four machines. But on each of them you could play wonderfully colourful games, inaccessible to our c64s. I won't say how much of that pocket money stayed in the "living room" and how many hours I spent there. I'll also be silent about the vultures who preyed on the smaller and weaker ones to get the money

for the next game. This is not important. The atmosphere of the arcades was unique and unmistakable, as were the games: Golden Axe, Cadillacs and Dinosaurs, Mortal Kombat or a mysterious game where you ran around as an Egyptian, the title of which is unknown to me... I was drawn there like a bear to honey, and I think it was there that I developed my interest in games "from the inside", why and how they work.

Scanner: I grew up in a block of flats in Siemianowice Śląskie. One of the first arcades, if you can call it a trailer on wheels, stood next to primary school no. 14, which I attended until the advent of pinball flippers (that's what my mates and I called arcades). The other one appeared in a shopping pavilion nearby. In both places there were a dozen or so slot machines and a few pinball machines, which were occupied by more mature arcade-goers. I recall that at the entrance to the Drzymala's car standing in front my school there was a window where a man was selling tokens called 'tins'. It was not a cosy place. The interior was noisy, dark, gloomy, covered with posters of action film characters (Rambo, Bruce Lee, Commando, etc.), with light coming from CRT screens. The smell of sweat and cigarette smoke permeated the whole room, making your throat ache, and even the small open window at the back did nothing to help. That's why my mates and I avoided going deeper into the lounge, usually choosing the first three machines near the entrance where there was still some air to breathe. My friend Sebastian and I spent a lot of time digging through the cash we'd stolen from our parents for chips to play Commando, Shinoby or the co-op Final Fight. There were days when we had no money to play. Then we would go and watch others play, sometimes friends would join a 'queue' to help get through a level. There were also unpleasant incidents when older "colleagues" would steal tokens from us, demanding in a loud and firm voice: "Give me a token or I'll fu#% punch you!" or, after throwing a token into the machine, they would push the younger ones away with the words: "Come on, kid, I'll show you how to complete that level". On more than one occasion, it was necessary to use real-life Street Fighter punches to prevent valuable tokens or cash from being sliced up. At these places the 'tin' was at a premium. A lot of sweat, blood and tears were shed so I could play my favourite games. Those were hard times, but also good times.

PS I must have mastered Street Fighter punches in real life, because I still have a token from a confrontation outside an arcade in Chorzów.

Sle3va: Amusement arcades is a bit too much to say. My first memories are of slot machines set up in cafes filled with cigarette smoke and, of course, the wooden carts of Drzymala or the popular barracks. Only now do I wonder how they got electricity there... And it was a luxury, because on the other side were the urine-smelling catacombs of Warsaw's main railway station. Where there is now the main underground space full of shops, there were just empty walls. And that's where I remember the biggest concentration of arcade machines, where a lot of twenty-zloty machines changed hands. Later, there was a real video game arcade at the Warsaw's main train station (they had a Terminator 2 pinball machine!), which over time turned into an internet café. In the 1990s, there were also arcades in holiday resorts. It didn't matter if it was

Zakopane in the mountains or the main street in Mielno at the Baltic sea coast - there were always two or three dark places, almost always filled to the brim with 13-20 year old boys (strangely, there were very few girls) staring at flickering screens full of pixels, listening to the squeaks and crackles that formed recognisable themes. These were the days when A500s were already in Polish homes, but the same games on the machines somehow looked better than their home versions (Golden Axe, Stunts, Pit Fighter). And if you went to the living room with your mates, where there was a machine that allowed four people to play at the same time (Gauntlet, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles), the afternoon went by in a flash. Today, I see an attempt to reactivate video game arcades, but these machines have been stripped of the magic that these machines exuded in the last century. I miss it.

Leon: I used to live far away from the "big centres", so it was extremely rare for me to visit arcades. I remember my first visit to one in August 1988, during a family holiday at the sea coast. It was also my first contact with computer games. They were, as it turned out years later, somewhat outdated, but in the grey reality of communist Poland, even the obsolete hits of the early 1980s provided hitherto unknown stimuli and great emotions, starting a fascination with electronic entertainment that has lasted to this day. The one that sticks in my mind is 'Pole Position', where I even managed to drive the whole stage, with the considerable help of my older brother, who stepped on the brakes at critical moments in the corners. All this in front of a group gathered around the bike, dressed in the fashionable jeans of the probably teenage commentators, who seemed to me as mature and serious as Nanny in the eyes of Muppets. This was not my only adventure with arcades, which I continued to visit in later years. Sometimes to the travelling ones, in the form of trailers equipped with slot machines, or to those set up in railway stations in Bydgoszcz, Konin or Wrocław. Although the games on display there were better, including three-dimensional, textured graphics worthy of the PSX, for all their technical splendour they couldn't beat the atmosphere of the late 1980s, when many goods were rationed and therefore much more highly valued.

Retrobajtel: For the rest of my life, I will associate play-rooms with an iconic place "behind the tracks", right next to my primary school. There was a hockey club, or rather a pub, where former hockey players, the so-called Old Boys, used to meet (a few hundred metres away was the "Jantor" ice rink, which still exists today, and the famous Polish hockey club "Naprzód Janów"). There were several slot machines in the pub and it was there that I had my first contact with coin-operated machines. My friends and I used to go there, sometimes during a long break, but mostly after school. Our trips to the arcade were usually like this: whoever had the money that day would play, and the rest of us would stand around, staring and cheering. I can't remember how many of these machines there were, maybe four or five, but each one was besieged by a bunch of kids. Of course, we didn't try to hack the machines for free credits, but the owner was wary and our skills were poor. I remember that many years



later I managed to 'control' a jukebox in another pub. But that's another story. Back to the slot machines... what did we play? Whatever was going on in the pub, we didn't mind because the quality of what was happening on the screens was light years ahead of our home equipment, if you were lucky enough to have a computer at home. I remember one game that I still have a great fondness for: Ghosts and Goblins. That's where I first saw it. There was also a Contra-style game, and it's possible it was Contra, there was Helicopter and Jeep (probably Silkworm) and a cool shoot'em up that I found and played on my ZX Spectrum (with the gummy keyboard). I still remember the impression these machines made on me. It could not be replicated

All my arcade experiences were also very important in that they were a prelude to the next stage of my gaming life, which was to become a console gamer.

– tommysi

on home hardware. I don't know what was in those machines, but the experience was incredible. The games exuded depth, something unmistakable, and it wasn't even the graphics or the sound that, as I wrote earlier, made my jaw drop. That's where the magic worked. As I played on the Spectrum, I imagined I was playing a slot machine, that I was holding an arcade stick, that the graphics were beautiful, that the experience was similar - my imagination was at its peak. But it wasn't the same... Then came the days of the Amiga, and I don't remember going there any more, and when I got my first PC, the brief adventure with arcade games was definitely over. I remember going to the arcade in the basement of the Katowice train station a few more times, but I don't have any memories of that time. Nowadays, when I am travelling, I happen to come across an arcade that still has real slot machines. Memories come flooding back and I'm as happy as a child again.

Tommysi: Obviously, we are among those where arcades have had a very positive influence and have furthered the affection for video games. In the second half of the 1990s, there were three such arcades operating simultaneously in my medium-sized town. They were usually set up in places that had previously housed VHS cassette rental shops. To this day, I remember the moments I spent at the arcade machines playing games like Die Hard Arcade, Zero Team, Metal Slug or Pong. As for fighting games, I am one of

those who prefer Virtua Fighter to Tekken. I also had a very pleasant moment with Mortal Kombat 3 Ultimate. I still remember my early days with Cyrax in that. More experienced colleagues managed to get through the whole game with just a 0.5 zloty coin and a character like Scorpion. All my arcade experiences were also very important in that they were a prelude to the next stage of my gaming life, which was to become a console gamer. The idea of faithfully transferring a game from the living room to the TV at home made my brain explode. Today, if someone asks me to name the single best video game console for me, I have no hesitation in answering: the Sega Dreamcast - precisely because of the large number of game ports from arcade machines.

Phowiec: My earliest memory of arcades was probably on holiday with my grandmother. She lived in the country, and although just staying there was a great attraction in itself (eating bread with sugar, drinking warm milk straight from the cow, or sitting by the nearby river all day), sometimes we would go on a trip to a nearby town. And there, in a sort of hut, were three slot machines. I only remember one with a biplane game. You had to take off skilfully, not get shot down in the air, and land at another airport at the end of the level. Three lives, 10 zloty in coins.

Deadman: I remember three such places from the communist/transformation period, and only one of them was set up in a shed on wheels, the other two occupied a large part of the underground passages under the Central Railway Station and the Wola State Department Store in Warsaw. The shed was located in Mokotów, between the allotment gardens along Raclawicka Street and the bottle and paper collection point on Komarowa Street; it was enough to collect two bags of bottles to earn money for some short period of fun. All I remember from there was a game in which you could observe a yellow and black battlefield with various enemy vehicles through a periscope attached to a vending machine. I remember the underground corridors in much more detail, having explored them when I owned a C64 (1990-1993), and was delighted to find that several of these amazing looking games had quite decent conversions on my home computer.

The first such title I proudly loaded from tape was 1945, passed with a trainer of course, and never looked back. Then I found Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles: The Coin-Op! in a version broken up into separately loaded levels, which didn't stop me from enjoying it, as I was still young enough to enjoy anything Ninja Turtles, even if the conversion wasn't a success. But the most wonderful discovery was Bubble Bobble, which I still love to play in both its C64 and Amiga versions. Then there was a game that I stared at for hours and blew my pocket money on three occasions, even though I didn't know the title. It wasn't until 15 years later that I stumbled across it via the MAME emulator - it was called Rolling Thunder, and it fascinated me with its catchy music, amazing sprite animations, and enemy uniforms that looked like the Ku Klux Klan in psychedelic colours. Not knowing the title, I didn't realise that conversions of the game had been released for both the C64 and the Amiga, but judging by the latter's ratings, I guess I did okay.

Hery: In the second half of the 1980s, arcades were almost magical places where the imagination could expand into



countless electronic worlds. In them, we could easily be fighter pilots, car drivers, martial arts champions, commandos.... All for the price of a single token. But there was always a shortage of tokens... You also had to be on your guard against the saloon "hoodlums", who tended to follow the usual pattern: "- Borrow a token. - I haven't got any. - Give me one! If I find one, they're all mine. Only those who had the Cohones walked in lockstep with a token in their shoe.

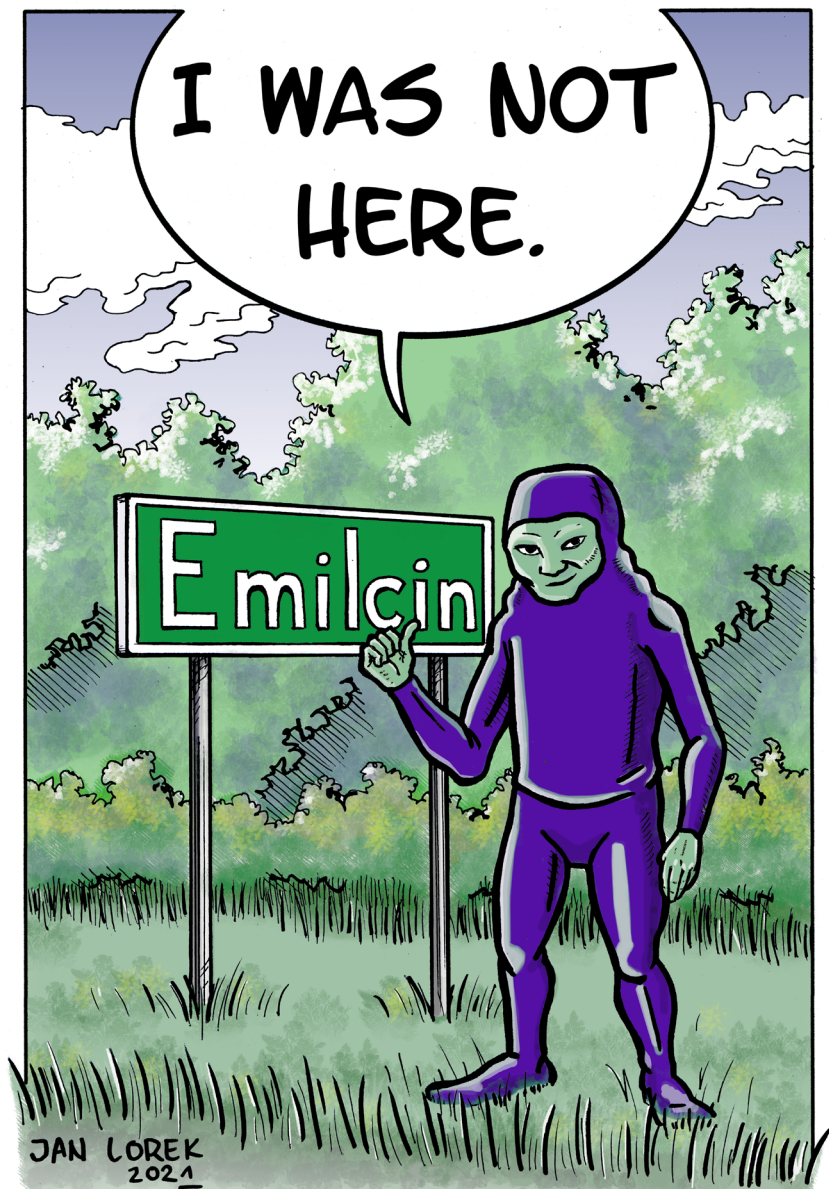
The games I remember most are the classics: Moon Patrol, Pitstop, Gyruss, International Karate. When you stood back and watched others playing these arcade games, everything seemed trivial. When it was your turn, however, the fun would quickly end and new chips would fall into the machine (because you had to play, after all).

At the time, I didn't see a clear difference between games on slot machines and those on 8-bit and 16-bit computers. Maybe that's why I didn't feel disadvantaged when I got my dream C64 in 1991. Being able to play hundreds of titles at home without having to put chips in meant more to me than slightly better graphics or more realistic sound.

Louie: Arcades were a very big part of my childhood. My suburb (in Melbourne Australia) had a couple of billiard halls where Yugoslav and Greek immigrants would get together on the weekends to socialize, play pool and card games. My dad would always bring me along when he visited these places and me and my cousins would entertain ourselves by playing a cowboy themed pinball game, billiards and the old Sprint arcade racing game for hours...what great times! By the time I became a teenager, we had moved out to a new suburb and my friends and I would spend most Saturday's traveling by train to the city to check out the latest music and Commodore 64 games but not before getting off at a station half-way in our journey in order to visit our favorite arcade hall at the time (which happened to be in the next suburb to where I originally grew up). This place had all the trademarks of trouble. It was dark, stinking of cigarettes and frequented by other kids who looked like they were from Michael Jackson's Beat It music video (LOL). But we didn't care or know any better - after all we got to play so many great games! Wonderboy, Hypersports, King of Boxer, Star Wars, Prohibition, Ghost 'n' Goblins and Bubble Bobble were just some of our favorites. Those arcade halls are now long gone but the memories of their bright screens, cheerful sounds and stinking cigarette smells will always be with me. ■

JOHNNY PRESENTS

Emilcin 1978



The reference to Emilcin was on the cover of *Space Collection*, a cartridge published by Bobr Games. In one of the flying saucers, I drew characters resembling the aliens described by Jan Wolski. They are in the lower left corner.



On 10 May 1978, in Emilcin, a small village near Opole Lubelskie, farmer Jan Wolski allegedly had contact with an extraterrestrial civilization. It's said that he met beings from another planet on the road as he rode a cart with his stallion mare. He and the newcomers soon found themselves on a ship hovering over a meadow, where the aliens came to inspect him. They even served the farmer their food. But Wolski did not try it.

This rumoured event led to the creation of a comic book drawn by Grzegorz Rosiński, whom readers may know from his work on *Thor*gal.

I really like this story. Sometimes I even play on YouTube the clip titled "Back to the Emilcin", a short film from the mid-1990s. It features Witold Wawrzonek, who is interested in UFOs. Jan Wolski's son Jozef also appears. Another person worth mentioning is Zbigniew Blania-Bolnar, a sociologist who studied aliens in Emilcin and who was informed about the incident by Witold Wawrzonek. For years the case was considered credible (there are people who still think so). I once bought Bartosz Rdutowski's book "Secret Operations. The PRL and UFOs" (Technol Publishing, 2013), in which the author describes his investigation aimed at verifying the alleged event. I may get some disapproving looks for saying this, but in my opinion Rdutowski's investigation is fair and makes the Emilcin alien case seem quite implausible, although we can debate the author's hypothesis of what might have actually happened.

In 2021, when I returned from the holidays, I visited the village to see a monument erected by the Nautilus Foundation to commemorate the alleged case of UFO contact. In the same year I made the drawing shown today. I wonder if any of you remember this story and what you think of it.

Johnny